

Dear Mr. Ellis

REF. LT.COAG.BFIRE.011103

COAG BUSH FIRE INQUIRY – SUBMISSION

INTRODUCTION

With reference to your advertisement in the Canberra Times of 18.10.03 and your web site I herewith wish to make the following submission.

It will be noticed that this submission canvasses matters such as “how not to do it” as well as making positive recommendations.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

I am a semi-retired professional engineer with qualifications in electrical engineering, fire engineering and paper technology. In addition I am a Senior Associate of the Australian and New Zealand Institute of Insurance and Finance. In that capacity I am a member of the Institute’s Certified Insurance Professional Council, which regulates the ongoing professional development of already qualified members.

I notice that the terms of reference for the Inquiry cover the following subjects:

1. *Risk factors contributing to bushfires, including deliberate fire lighting,*
2. *The impact of bushfires on the environment, human life, property and the economy,*
3. *The adequacy of infrastructure and human resources for fire fighting mitigation purposes.*

It is to these 3 subjects to which I address myself in this submission.

DELIBERATE FIRE LIGHTING

The above term has been well chosen. It includes the following aberrant behaviour patterns:

- Arson
- Incendiarism
- Pyromania

All three different terms have different meanings.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica quotes the following three Merriam-Webster definitions:

1. *Arson – Act of burning; the wilful or malicious burning of property (as a building), especially with criminal or fraudulent intent*
2. *Incendiarism – Incendiary action or behaviour*
3. *Pyromania – An irresistible impulse to start fires*

This submission will deal with all 3 terms, especially terms 1 and 3.

Broadly the international literature lists the objectives of arsonist or fire setters as follows:

- Commission of a crime for the following main reasons:
 - Insurance fraud, e.g. by destroying old buildings in the hope of replacing the structure with the help of the insurance proceeds
 - Elimination of business competition
 - Revenge
 - Terrorism (a relatively new term)
 - Destruction of incriminating records
 - Endeavour to obtain business or work, e.g. by fire fighters or persons related to the insurance industry (e.g. fire investigators, loss adjusters etc.)
- The experience of a perceived pleasure from seeing flames. Fire setters often like to attend the scene of the fire they set and the attempts by the fire brigade to control the fire.
- Sexual gratification
- Playing with flames. Often juveniles are involved.

I worked for 15 years as Fire Engineer, later Manager – Risk Engineering and Deputy Manager of Munich Reinsurance Co. Australasia Ltd., the largest professional reinsurer worldwide and member of the “Munich Re Group” (including Allianz Insurance and many other wholly owned and part-own companies). In this capacity I studied the subject of “Arson” both in the USA and Germany.

In 1981 I formed, in co-operation with Munich Re and the Insurance Council of Australia, the former “NSW Standing Committee on Arson”. I chaired this committee for 11-12 years in Sydney; whereafter the committee was wound up. The reason for the winding up was the total and utter lack of the NSW State Governments of both political persuasions and a waning interest by the insurance industry. An attempt was made to form a National Committee on Arson (one meeting in Sydney) and this failed for exactly the same reasons. Both NSW and Victorian State Governments showed no interest.

The committee achieved some successful developments but in the majority negative results because arson was the last thing on the minds of governments and insurers at a time of a “soft” or “cash flow underwriting” market.

I studied the incidents of fire in general and arson in particular in the USA with contacts to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms and the FBI. The Americans at that time had a very much higher incidence of fire in general and arson in particular, but achieved drastic reductions in both areas with the typical enthusiastic commitments Americans display in their daily lives – all in contrast to our typical “can’t be done”, “we have always done it this way” and “too expensive” reactions.

NSW STANDING COMMITTEE ON ARSON

The NSW Division of the then Australian Fire protection Association (AFPA), now Fire Protection Association Australia (FPAA), formed the committee in late 1981. I was secretary, later chairman for many years of the AFPA and initiated the formation.

In the first half of 1982 the Insurance Council of Australia joined the committee and became an enthusiastic supporter of our aims, objectives and efforts. At that time no one had any idea of the costs of arson, which could be divided into the following categories:

- Insured losses
- Uninsured losses
- Losses to the economy of NSW, which we knew would be much larger than insured and uninsured losses

The committee at that time was primarily interested in “structure fires”. Little was known of and little thought was given to bushfires caused by arson and the resultant losses to urban and rural structures. Although we were aware at that time of the definitions for different acts of deliberate fire lighting we, for convenience sake, lumped all 3 definitions together under the term “arson”.

Prior to the formation of the committee I co-operated with the CSIRO Division of Building, Construction and Engineering in estimating as far as was then possible the insured and uninsured losses in Australia for an international conference. The statistics available at that time from the then Commonwealth Insurance Commissioner were very sketchy, showed no statistics on arson losses, but revealed that approximately 40 – 45% of the value of Australian buildings and structures were uninsured. In other words the owners were classified as “self-insured”. I believe that this proportion has not greatly changed; indeed it might have become worse. The residential losses of the 2003 fire in Canberra appear to highlight this state of affairs.

The NSW Standing Committee had its own constitution and decided that only related industry bodies, both State Government and private enterprise, should be invited to delegate members. The membership finally settled down to the following:

- Insurance Council of Australia – NSW branch
- Australian Fire Protection Association
- NSW State Rail Authority
- NSW Department of Education
- NSW Government Insurance Office GIO (now privatised)
- NSW Police Service
- NSW Fire Brigades
- Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters
- Institute of Loss Adjusters Australia
- CSIRO
- Bushfire Council (now Rural Fire Service; withdrew support after 2 or 3 years because of putative “lack of achievements”)
- National Insurance Brokers Association (NIBA)

Broadly the constitution of the committee allowed for the following activities:

- Education of the insurance industry in arson detection, investigation of spurious claims and rejection of such claims,

- Education of the legal profession in arson detection in cooperation with insurers and loss adjusters in arson detection and prosecution of arsonists and fire setters,
- Cooperation with the NSWFB with a view to setting up a specialist fire investigation unit,
- Cooperation with the NSW Police Service with a view to setting up an arson squad and training arson detectives,
- Cooperation with NSW Government agencies affected by arson losses, e.g. the NSW Education Department, State Rail Authority, etc.,
- Community education through seminars and radio talks,
- Research into fire and arson statistics and the economic losses to NSW,
- Cooperation with academic institutions (UNSW, UTS) in fostering the setting up of scientific fire investigation laboratories, e.g. gas chromatographic investigations of materials found at a fire ground,
- Interaction with other Australian State agencies, e.g. police and State Insurance offices in SA and W.A.

The committee in the first few years created a relatively large amount of enthusiasm among insurers, police, fire brigade and the legal profession. Major seminars were held in the ballroom of the Sydney Hilton Hotel and in an auditorium of the University of NSW. Smaller seminars were held in other places.

Insurers, the Education Department, State Rail Authority etc. set up their own fire investigation units.

Our great disappointment was the attitude of the NSW State Governments of both political persuasions. The NSW Police Service, from memory, already had an “Arson Squad”, which, however appeared to have been ineffective. Some time after the committee was formed the police arson squad was disbanded. Allegedly was incorporated in the Bomb Squad at a time when assassinations were carried out against a judge and the Parramatta Court building (I cannot remember the exact name of this squad). With change of government a new police arson squad was formed, no doubt because of the enthusiastic support of an Assistant Commissioner sitting on our committee. Having returned from a study trip on the subject of arson to the USA I strongly encouraged the police representative to proceed to the US to study police methods in coming to grips with their huge arson problem. His trip was initially approved, only to be cancelled in the last minute when he had already packed his bags. In other words the matter of dealing with the subject of arson in NSW became a budgetary tool for the Treasury of the NSW State Government.

A similar experience was made with the NSWFB. It took the committee years to convince the Minister for Police and Emergency Services (both political persuasions) that the NSWFB should have a fire investigation section. The State Government repeatedly rejected this suggestion. Mr. Rath, then Director General of the NSWFB told me personally that on then present plans a Fire Investigation Unit was likely to be established in approximately 7 years time. I then personally requested an appointment with Mr. Paciullo, then Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Mr. Paciullo expressed some frustration with the bureaucracy, saw the need for a Fire Investigation section and a 7-person section was quickly established within 6 – 12 months after all.

Several insurance companies reacted to the recommendations of the committee and eventually appointed their own fire investigation officers.

These mostly consisted of police detectives from the disbanded arson squad who introduced the knowledge they gained in the police force to their employers.

The committee was concerned with the total lack of fire statistics (other than the very rudimentary statistics of the NSWFB and the lack of knowledge in respect of the loss caused by arson fires and crime to the NSW economy. I studied the problem of arson in the USA. At that time the USA, per million residents, experienced approximately 3.5 times the insured fire losses, which were recorded in Australia, and also approximately 3 times the arson losses which insurers believed to suffer (without any statistical basis) in this country.

The reason for the extremely high US structure fire losses was that the country was much older than Australia, the US had relatively primitive building regulations compared with NSW regulations and many residential single and even multi-storey buildings were and still are constructed of timber with the roofs covered with plain dried-out or asphalt impregnated timber shingles. Roof coverings of this kind spread fire like a bushfire in Australia.

The reason for the extremely high arson crime rate was that owners of old or combustible multi-storey tenement buildings wanted to expel socio-economically poor tenants in the hope of the insurers paying for the replacement with modern structures attracting a more affluent tenants. I saw whole suburbs in New York in which the remnants of burnt-down buildings had been removed and the sites graded ready for new construction.

I discussed these issues with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms (BATF), the FBI, the Board of Fire Underwriters and the New York Chief Fire Marshall. The results of these discussions are summarised in the section “RECOMMENDATIONS” further below.

“Wild Fires” or bushfires were not much in the news at that time, neither was the subject of bushfire arson a topic of discussion in Australia or by the committee.

I also visited the head office of the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) in Quincy MA. where I obtained a copy of the NFIRS (National Fire Incidence Reporting System), which later, at the instigation of the committee, became the “grandfather” of Australian Standard AS 2577.

From the FBI I obtained the latest crime statistics. In the USA at that time arson among the 10 major crimes was listed as No. 3 crime. Where arson involved the crossing of State lines the Bureau of Alcohol, Fire Arms and Explosives is the investigating authority. The BATF has developed highly sophisticated methods with which to track down arsonist and the details of the crime. The BATF prided itself of being able to track down most arsonists within 14 days of the commission of the crime. It picks up arson investigation when it is suspected or certain that the crime is “across State lines”, in other words involving more than one jurisdiction. The prosecution of the arsonist is then passed on to the most appropriate jurisdiction.

We were unable to obtain any data on the estimated economic losses from arson to the USA. I was unable to make contact with the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA). This organisation was one of the key bodies pushing vigorously for the reduction of the arson problem in the US and had designed a large variety of detailed training and educational programs for the prevention investigation and prosecution of arson for many federal and state agencies. However the NSW Standing Committee on Arson was in the possession of the CDAA’s program manuals. There is no question that this organization’s aggressive educational programs are largely responsible for the reduction of the arson problem in the USA. In contrast the efforts of Australian government agencies in arson prevention, to the extent they exist at all, are puny, amateurish and unproductive.

ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Economic Losses from Arson

At the time of the establishment of the committee no data were available in respect of the economic losses – as distinct from insurance losses – to the NSW community. Indeed during my visit to the USA I was unable to obtain any data applying to the US.

The NSW Standing Committee on Arson later applied to the Institute of Criminology for a grant to finance research into economic losses from arson in NSW and was very grateful that the Institute made available a \$ 20,000 grant. This would have been in the late eighties. The grant was issued to an economic research firm, which undertook the task with my personal cooperation. The outcome of the report was that in that time the economic loss was approximately \$ 60 Million. The consulting firm worked in close cooperation with the NSW Police Service, the NSWFB and the Insurance Council of Australia. However, there was a serious caveat to this estimate, namely the limited (at that time) amount of data available for the research. At that time the NSWFB had adopted for reporting purposes Australian Standard AS 2577 only approximately 6-8 months ago. The data available from the insurance industry and from its own reporting system were still sketchy and covering a very short time span – too short really for statistical purposes. This limited the value of the research considerably. The committee and the economic research firm came to the considered opinion that in the late eighties the economic loss to NSW would have been in the order of \$ 100 Mio.

About the same time, possibly shortly before the committee assisted the International Association of Arson Investigators with the staging of a one-day seminar in a major hotel in Sydney. On the morning of this seminar I was surprised to read a bold headline in “The Australian” similar to “1 Billion Arson Loss in Australia”. The Deputy Chief Executive of the Insurance Council of Australia wrote into the paper and quite obviously a gross and unqualified exaggeration of the potential arson losses in this country placed the article. The particular officer of the ICA resigned from the organisation soon thereafter, but this issue highlighted to us all the more the importance of obtaining more accurate statistics and estimates of the economic arson losses to this country. After all in those years the word “Billion” was hardly ever news and only became common usage in the last 6-8 years.

At that time the committee still was not concerned with the problem of juvenile fire setters and bushfire arson.

In the early nineties, at a time when the NSW State Government and the insurance industry appeared to have lost interest in the subject of arson (indeed the NSWFB advised that the Government wanted to close down the Fire Investigation Unit which in the end did not take place) the committee became interested in the problem of juvenile fire setters and bushfire arson. I personally had correspondence with a clinical psychiatrist (he could have been also a psychologist in San Diego (from memory a Dr. Feinstein) who was successful in treating juvenile fire setters and felt that the committee should facilitate a visit by this gentleman to Sydney. Unfortunately the committee soon thereafter decided to liquidate itself and the contact was broken off.

At the time of the existence of the NSW Standing Committee on Arson not much thought was given to the problem of bushfire fire setting. The main reason was that the then Bush Fire Council considered the efforts of the committee, which after all was a voluntary industry committee, as ineffective, although the committee tried again and again unsuccessfully to enlist the assistance of the State Government. It must also be said that no other body ever took the initiatives, which this committee took.

Clearly the experiences of the NSW, ACT and Victorian bushfire (over 4 Mio. hectares burnt, hundreds of buildings destroyed, lives lost) and the Californian wildlife fires in the immediate past make research into the problem of bushfire fire setting important and urgent in addition of course to any research into urban encroachment on bush land and the causes and origins of bushfires themselves. In this area the CSIRO are internationally renowned experts for many years.

Adequate Infrastructure

The investigation of the “cause and origin” of fires at present is left to State and Territory police and fire brigades. All of these agencies appear to have different education and training programs. In the age of “terrorism” which can affect more than one State or Territory this is not enough. It should be remembered that “explosions” are fires also, namely fast fires, and this brings us close to a concept of a superior national authority such as the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms (BATF) which in addition to thousands of community (not State) police forces and fire departments carries out training of various forms of crime detection including arson.

To my knowledge Australian police forces and fire brigades have only little over-arching training and field procedures. State fire brigades (MBF, CFA, NSWFB, RFS, etc.) have their own training colleges. Training for fire officer recruits is basic only in terms of the nature of fire, fire extinguishments, spread of fire, fire hazards etc. There is no formal career structure. Fire fighters can enroll for fairly good training courses in the Australian Institute of Fire Engineers, an offshoot of the British Institute of Fire Engineers. However, many fire fighters almost regard their job with their fire brigade as a “second job” and their contract gardening, lawn mowing or other miscellaneous job as their “first job” thus augmenting their wages substantially. This type of arrangement does not appear to be conducive to elevate the job of fire fighters to a permanent “career”. Relatively few fire fighters take on the onerous task of studying through the Australian Institute of Fire Engineers, and even fewer are ultimately promoted to more senior positions such as Station Officer, District Officer, Managers of Hazardous Materials Units and the like.

In contrast in Germany fire fighters are classified either as “Non-commissioned Fire Officers and “Commissioned Fire Officers. For both classifications the entry qualification into a fire brigade are much higher than here. A Non-commissioned Fire Officer must have completed a trade and served several years in that trade before entering the fire service. A Commissioned Fire Officer must have a university degree and must have worked for several years in a major industry, before being accepted into the fire service. Commissioned Fire Officers later are often drafted for certain time periods into government departments such as a State Emergency Services, Interior Ministries, etc. In Germany being a member of a fire brigade is a career and represents a permanent (and only) job. The status of a fire officer is therefore much more recognized by the community. In contrast in Australia the job of a fire fighter often is regarded as a job for someone who is of little use to anything else.

It should be remembered that only a few years ago the NSWFB, Police and Ambulance turned up at major road accidents and that often pretty violent arguments occurred as to who had the right to extract the dead or injured body/ies from the wreckage. It took several years for the NSW State Government to settle the argument in favor of the NSWFB (see the NSW Disaster Plan and NSW Hazmat Plan).

I cannot comment here in detail on a comparison of budgets for fire brigades/departments in the USA, UK, Germany and Australia.

I can only say that at the time of the establishment of the NSW Standing Committee of Arson, when I had often a chance to be in contact the then President of the Board of Fire Commissioners (now Director General of the NSWFB) the budget for the NSWFB was absolutely pitiful compared with what in my layman's opinion it should have been. Consequently many fire stations were greatly outdated, could not be used for hydraulic fire fighting units and the equipment was often superseded. A large portion of the budget for all fire services consisted – and still consists (!) of the FSL (Fire Service Levy) on fire insurers, which from memory was and still is in the order of 27.5% - a thing almost unheard of outside Australia. I have often been in contact with fire departments in Germany (indeed brought lecturers to Australia) and can only say that the German fire services were and very likely are much better equipped than Australian fire services. Similar comments apply to USA and Japan. Japan in my opinion has the most advanced and best equipped fire and emergency service in the world (for obvious reasons). Of course if one said this the Treasurer or Premier of a State one is most likely to hear that these services are adequately funded. We have a long way to go in Australia in establishing comprehensive and adequately funded emergency services including specialists, which apply themselves to arson prevention, arson detection and arson prosecution and for these officers there should be an attractive career path.

Of course one cannot expect even the best-integrated emergency service to prevent the New York World Trade Centre catastrophe.

To me it seems important that COAG examines as part of its terms of reference the funding, training and equipment of all emergency services Australia-wide and works towards a greater integration of these services. One element of an over-arching authority could be an Australian service à la the US BATF.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What not to do

I respectfully submit the following recommendations, which of course are not comprehensive and all-inclusive. These recommendations can only serve as a selection of major themes, which would require considerably more research and resulting implementation by the members of COAG even in respect of what appears to be the ordinary subject of “bushfires”.

1. Each state to examine its own economic losses. Bushfire arson losses often affect more than one State.
2. Each State to frame its own additional crimes legislation. There should be uniformity.
3. Each fire authority (e.g. NSWFB, NSW Rural Fire Service, MFB, CFA, etc.) to have its own jealously guarded small fire investigation team. It is open knowledge that the relations between NSWFB and RFS, also between the MFB and CFA are often rather strained.
4. Carry on with current methods by the NSW State Government (possibly also other State Governments) of short term budgeting for Fire Investigation Units. A Fire Investigation Unit must be based on a secure permanent footing.
5. Untrained criminal lawyers are expected to prosecute the crime of arson.
6. Insurance companies be permitted to “settle the claim” (in the case of general arson) in order to avoid the Court costs. The Insurance Contracts Act should be amended accordingly. It should be an offence for a fire insurer to “settle” in order to avoid Court proceedings.

7. All juvenile fire setters are automatically treated as “criminals”. There are very good reasons for not doing this.
8. Carry on with the piece-meal short-term approach to what really should be long-term budgeting and planning for fire brigades and emergency services by the States and Territories without a deciding influence of the Federal Government.
9. Stick to the present industrial relations procedures and career paths of the various fire brigades.

What **should be** done?

I suggest that, broadly speaking, the following steps be considered:

1. A detailed national survey be undertaken, as accurately as possible, to calculate the following losses:
 - Total economic losses Australia wide resulting from general (structure) arson;
 - Total economic losses Australia wide resulting from bushfire arson, and its resulting losses to buildings, plant, equipment, farms etc.;
 - Economic losses to each State and Territory resulting from general (structure) arson;
 - Economic losses to each State and Territory resulting from bushfire arson, and the resulting losses to buildings, plant, equipment, farms etc.;

The firm entrusted with these tasks should work in close cooperation with the AFP, State Police Services, fire authorities and the insurance industry.

2. The Commonwealth should frame its own model arson legislation, presumably as part of the Crimes Act. The States should be strongly encouraged to adopt this legislation.
3. A national training authority is established with the aim to train fire investigators, insurance claims officers, loss adjusters and the legal profession in arson investigation, detection and prosecution. I know that several jurisdictions have, had or at least had, some training facilities, but not **jointly** for these professions and not sufficiently in depth. In fact I suggested once that the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms be invited to train professionals in NSW but this was rejected out of hand, probably for budgetary reasons, and possibly also as a result of some inter-departmental jealousies.

I remember that 2 members (including myself) of the NSW Standing Committee on Arson were invited by the NSW Police Service to join a class of arson detectives over a long weekend at the Goulburn Police Academy in order to assist cadet arson detectives (already qualified detectives) with specific training and to rate their performance as part of final examination. I must confess that sadly I failed one of the cadets who had to go back into the general detective service.

In this connection I should mention that in the eighties a number of enthusiasts set up the Australian Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators. I was invited to join representing the NSW Standing Committee on Arson, but refrained from doing so, because I felt that a number of grossly untrained persons had joined this association. I should emphasize that the International Association in the USA in my opinion had a very high reputation and that Australia could learn much from this source.

4. Specialist courses are set up as part of the legal curriculum for solicitors and barristers training these professionals in arson investigation and prosecution, over and above recommendation 3. Above. The Australian rate of convictions as “Cleared by Court” is abysmally poor when compared with certain overseas jurisdictions, e.g. the USA, UK, and Germany etc. Australia cannot afford to let this situation drag on decade after decade.
5. The State and Territory fire brigades operate their own training colleges, which impart to recruits physical fire, smoke and rescue training and the basic theoretical training. The USA in addition to the colleges, which the States operate, has a highly reputed national fire and emergency training facility. I suggest that a similar training college be established in Australia and that selected fire and related officers from the States and Territories be delegate to attend such college. Among other features this college should train officers in arson prevention and detection. The effect of this recommendation would have to be integrated with recommendations 3. and 4. above, because there may be some doubling up in this respect.

I should mention that I have been a member for many years of the NFPA (national Fire Protection Association) and the SFPE (Society of Fire Protection Engineers), both in the USA. Without a doubt the NFPA is **the** international Standards making body for fire protection related fields and is recognized as the leading body in practically the whole world. Standards Australia often makes Standards based on equivalent NFPA Codes. The SFPE until the eighties was the only international academic body to rate professional fire engineers. Since that time universities have introduced fire-engineering courses to undergraduate and post-graduate levels in Australia and several other countries.

The reason why I mention this is that both NFPA and SFPE have a very prominent public influence on the American public and on politics, something that is entirely unknown here. Astronaut John Glenn championed the famous “America Burning” Congress Inquiry. John Glenn presented the result of the Inquiry to former President Ronald Reagan, who took a personal interest in the outcome of this Inquiry. Thereafter the NFPA prepared the famous “Learn Not to Burn” program, which is found in many American households. Again to date Australian Governments have shown no similar interest and enthusiasm. May be things will be changed after the COAG Inquiry.

6. I recommend that the States and Territories institute the office of Fire Marshals as practiced in the USA. A US Fire Marshal is a mixture of police and fire brigade officer and is usually highly trained in arson detection. A fire Marshal “rides” on the lead fire appliance to a major incident and has overarching powers over the police and the fire brigade.
7. Insurance companies simply should not be permitted under any circumstances to settle a claim if even the slightest suspicion exists that a claim is fraudulent as a result of arson. Fraudulent insurance claims already are reasonably vigorously fought by insurers, but in my experience not to collect the proceeds of arson.

At this stage I do not know how this can be done. This requires further examination, but I suggest that may be APRA be charged with the oversight of suspicious insurance claims and that whatever authority is charged with this task should work in close cooperation with the police force of the jurisdiction involved.

8. Towards the end of the existence of the committee I was in contact with a clinical psychiatrist in San Diego in connection with the treatment of juvenile fire setters.

I regarded it as a great disappointment that this contact had to be dropped because of the liquidation of the committee. Young people who could easily be steered in the right direction often set Bush fires. I believe we now have in Australia psychiatrists who specialise in adventurous or aberrant juvenile behaviour patterns.

The Colleges of Psychiatry and Psychology be consulted on how they could contribute to the debate, issue guidelines to police, fire brigade and the legal profession concerning the handling and treatment of juvenile fire setters. Indeed a panel of psychiatrists and psychologist should be set up in each jurisdiction, which would assist the police, fire brigade and legal profession.

I am a layman in this field. But even many laypersons cannot agree, and that includes myself, that every juvenile fire setter is a “criminal”. Of course there are criminals among this class, but it is necessary to separate the adventurous juveniles from the outright vandals.

My own youngest grandson just loved to play with minor fire and fireworks. But by now at age of 14 he has become entirely sensible in this regard, after due admonition from his father and grandfather.

I note that at least in the ACT penalties and goal sentences for juvenile fire setters have been sharply increased and only hope that the adults who handle juvenile fire setters, including judges, either know what they are doing or be trained accordingly.

I believe that there are a number of trained psychiatrists and psychologists in Australia who engage in the treatment of juvenile fire setters, but should I be wrong then I would recommend that COAG makes contact with the appropriate US and UK authorities.

9. There are no doubt a number of additional detailed recommendations, which I could suggest. In this regard please refer to my accompanying letter.

I would be happy to discuss this submission and recommendations with the committee heading the Inquiry.

Max R. Pallavicini, VDI, Dipl.-Ing., SFPE, Sen.Assoc. ANZIIF, CIP
ALP Risk Management

Canberra ACT, 10th November 2003