



2009 Victorian Bushfires  
Royal Commission



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27 MAR 2009

## Submissions cover sheet (for postal submissions)

Please download, print and complete this form, and enclose it with any *postal* submission you make to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. (NB. Electronic submissions can be lodged directly at [www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au) and do not require this coversheet.)

Post your submission to: **Submissions, 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission,  
GPO Box 4358, Melbourne 3001**

General submissions close at 4.00pm, Monday 18 May 2009.

### YOUR DETAILS

Your title (eg. Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr etc..)	MR
Your full name	KENNETH THOMAS GAMMON
Organisation represented by your submission (if applicable)	—
Email address	[REDACTED]
Postal address	[REDACTED] YOKINE WA 6060
Telephone	[REDACTED]

### Main topics addressed by your submission (please tick):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Causes and circumstances of the bushfires
<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy, preparation and planning of governments, emergency services
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preparation and planning by communities and households
<input type="checkbox"/>	Response to the bushfires
<input type="checkbox"/>	Essential services, including water and power
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

### Please list any towns or communities that are discussed in detail in your submission:


### Please provide a general description of what materials you are providing as part of your submission (eg. Letter; documents; DVD, photos etc... NB. No originals please)

1.
2.
3.

Please tick here if you request your submission to be treated as confidential: ☐

### 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.
- The Royal Commission will consider any requests for confidentiality. I will be contacted if any request I make is not granted and have the option to withdraw my submission.
- I can be contacted by the Royal Commission in relation to my submission.

Signature

Date

25 MARCH 2009

YOKINE WA 6060

19<sup>th</sup> February 2009

**RESPECTFULLY TO THE COMMISSIONER  
THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES**

We, the undersigned, namely George Jamieson and Ken Gammon, having worked as State Electricity Commission District Engineers in the hills area of Western Australia between 1945 and 1985, wish to make a submission to the authorities and the Royal Commission investigating causes of the Victorian bushfires. We contend that for every arsonist caught or suspected of maliciously lighting fires there would probably be several fires resulting from poorly maintained and controlled aerial electricity lines. These fires are rarely traced back to the real cause due to the fact that Electricity Authorities will not take the blame because of financial claim responsibilities: also the taking of blame can result in substantial condemnation by the public.

There are many ways by which a fire can be caused by lack of maintenance and expenditure by the electricity supplier, especially during hot, dry windy conditions.

Among these ways are:

1. Self twisting of timber poles during seasoning and sagging anchor poles, causing the uneven slackness of the wires which can clash together in high winds resulting in sparks dropping or in some cases the lines breaking and falling to the ground.

2. High tension lines are usually protected by expulsion type drop out fuses. Quite often, when the fuses operate, due to a fault on the system a shower of sparks are expelled, some of which reach the ground. The blowing of fuses often happens on the hot windy days with which we are concerned.

3. Untrimmed trees in a high wind can cause wires to clash together resulting as above.

There are many reasons why the verge trees are not trimmed as they should be.

The public's regard for the environment has prevented tree growth from being trimmed when this would have been advisable; in fact, it is quite common in the press to see home owners shaking their fists at tree trimmers trying to do their job. The global warming argument has seen the tipping of the scales in a dangerous direction.

Areas of concern in the Darling Ranges are Upper Swan, Darlington and Kalamunda and no doubt there are many such areas in Victoria. We contend that whether arsonists are caught, hung, or serve 25 years, this will do nothing for the problem.

It is expecting too much to have a safe and secure electricity supply system in fire prone areas without a great deal more money and time directed to the above. We, both experienced engineers have witnessed fires started this way and we have also been aware of Electricity authorities trying to evade blame and financial responsibility.

Please note that the above remarks apply to the period ending 1985. There is no reason to believe that conditions have improved since then and every reason to believe that the situation has worsened. We know of no senior positions held by people who have had bush experience. Unfortunately, the people who have had this experience do not have control of the purse strings.

It is one thing to see Kings Park in WA burnt and disfigured. It will regrow. It is a different thing altogether to have 200 people perish under tragic circumstances, they will not regrow. It is time all electricity consumers were charged the full cost of their supply, including the maintenance of their supply lines.

Kenneth T Gammon - ex MIEA Ret.

George G Jamieson - ex MIEA Ret.

Copies of this submission will be sent to:  
The West Australian "Letters to the Editor"