

INFERNO – THE DAY VICTORIA BURNED

Roger Franklin

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Luncheon Seminar: 12 noon – 2:00pm

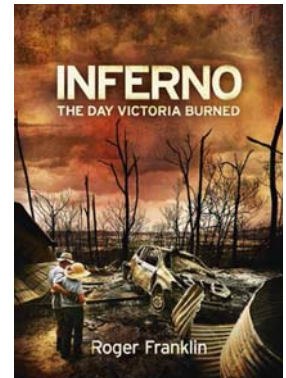
Morgans at 401
401 Collins Street, Melbourne



“Veteran journalist Roger Franklin has criticised many levels of Victorian bushfire management, and expressed doubt that anything will change for the better.”

ABC News October 2, 2009

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/02/2702803.htm>



On February 7, 2009, 160+ people died in a 10 hour period during the worst bushfire disaster in Australian history. The Black Saturday fires as the day became known eventually claimed 173 lives, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and torched 430,000 hectares. Families were torn apart, communities crushed, entire towns destroyed and millions of dollars worth of social and economic infrastructure reduced to rubble by an unstoppable sea of flames.

Written by veteran journalist Roger Franklin, *Inferno* is a classic blend of action, heartbreak, survival, love and community. The narrative brings to life individual tales of horror and heroism, recounts the devastation of Kinglake, Marysville and other besieged Victorian towns, and salutes the generosity and unyielding spirit of humanity on the state's darkest day.

There were failings, too, on a day of unprecedented tragedy. Communication breakdowns, inadequate warning systems, bush left unburnt for years and lack of leadership were all factors when Victoria burned.

“The impact of these fires is seared into the consciousness of those who lived through them.” 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission – Interim Report

THE AUTHOR: Roger Franklin has covered disasters and debacles in Australia and the United States for more than three decades. He has been a writer and editor for the Sun-Herald, Time, Business Week, the New York Post and Melbourne's Herald Sun. The author of *The Defender: the Story of General Dynamics*, an acclaimed book on the history of waste, fraud and abuse at the Pentagon, Roger Franklin now lives in Melbourne.

Cost: \$50

Pay at the door (Cash or cheque only made out to Morgans at 401 – eftpos facilities not available)

R.S.V.P. November 15

stewart.mcarthur@roymorgan.com

Sue Renshaw: 9224 5112

Replies: Stewart McArthur, Convenor: Stretton Group, 401 Collins Street, (GPO Box 2282U), Melbourne, 3001

About the Stretton Group

The Stretton Group is an apolitical, not-for-profit group established in December 2003 following the disastrous south east Australian bushfire crisis in 2002/3. The Stretton Group comprises a disparate association of volunteers who support the protection of the natural environment through greater transparency of the public sector processes involved. Named after the respected Royal Commissioner into 1939 Victorian Bushfires, Justice Leonard Stretton, the group proposes that government managed national parks and forests should be provided with a balance sheet value which encapsulates the environmental, cultural and economic value of these assets.

The Stretton Group is committed to ensuring that our intergenerational responsibility is met by Governments committing appropriate funding to the maintenance of this public property – commensurate with its asset value. The Group advocates the preparation and publication of performance indicators which enable the public to assess the quality of the management being provided to the natural environment. This would bring publicly owned wilderness into line with reporting required for hospitals, schools and other public institutions. The Stretton Group is committed to ensuring that the public debate about conservation is conducted on a balanced and informed basis – which may often disturb political myths or common preconceptions about the present quality of environmental preservation.

Members of the Stretton Group:

Simon Paton is a 5th generation farmer and cattle breeder from Callaghans Creek, Mitta Mitta and owns and operates the Bogong Ski-Hire centre at Mt Beauty. Simon has been a major spokesman for NE Victorian communities affected by the bushfires and is campaigner for community involvement conservation and forest management.

Peter Attiwill, AM, PhD, BScFor, AssocDipFor, is Principal Fellow in Botany, and Senior Fellow, The Australian Centre, The University of Melbourne. He has researched in eucalypt ecology over 40 years, with a concentration on soils and nutrient cycles, and on bushfires and ecosystem recovery. He has published extensively in the international journals, and his latest book is *Ecology: An Australian Perspective* (co-editor BA Wilson, Oxford University Press 2003).

Athol Hodgson, BScFor, AssocDipFor, has more than 50 years experience in fire management and forest fire research in Australia, USA, Canada, France and Spain. He was formerly Commissioner for Forests, and then Chief Fire Officer, Department of Conservation Forests and Lands. He was a Member of the Board of the Country Fire Authority and a Member of the State Disaster Committee and is a graduate from the National Advanced Fire Behaviour School, Marana, Arizona.

Bill Middleton, OAM, DipFor, has some 50 years experience in management of forests, of nurseries and of vegetation habitat in rural areas and he is an Honorary Life Member of Birds Australia. He was Supervisor of the innovative Potter Farmland Plan for ecologically-sustainable agriculture, and a Board Associate for the Trust for Nature.

David Packham, OAM, MAppSci, worked for 40 years in bushfire research with CSIRO, Monash University and the Australian Emergency Management Institute. He was responsible for fire-weather services in the Bureau of Meteorology. His extensive research concentrated on the physics of bushfires, and he applied this research to practical issues including the development of aerial prescribed burning, non-evacuation of properties, modelling of fire behaviour, and forensics.

Stewart McArthur, MA Cantab, was the Federal Member for Corangamite 1984 – 2007, a Camperdown farmer and company director. He was an active member of the all-party House of Representatives Select committee Inquiry into the 2003 Australian Bushfires whose report *A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires* was tabled on Wednesday 5 November 2003.

Stretton Group Forums and Seminars:

Inaugural Oration Phil Cheney “**The Green Inferno**” (the Politics of Bushfires and Conservation) (November 25, 2004)

Forest Industries: “**Their Contribution to Global Sustainability**” Tricia Caswell (September 29, 2005)

“**Lock ‘em up and let ‘em burn**” – Public forum on Grampians and Anakie fires 2006 (February 23, 2006)

“**Fire – Flood – Mud – Water**” – Speakers Rob Gilder and Prof David Dunkerley (May 28, 2008)

“**Fire in Water Catchments**” Professor Mark Adams, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture Food and Natural Resources, University of New South Wales. (November 19, 2008)

“**The Catastrophe Australia Had To Have Which Crippled Victoria**” – Roger Underwood (March 18, 2009)