

MR. McNAMARA.

Somerville Plantation Fire
November 16th, 1968.

At 2.50 p.m. on Saturday November 16th, a fire was reported by the Somerville Towerman, its position being given as Compartment 1.

The Somerville gang and F/Ranger Bukelis left H.Q. immediately and arrived at the fire by 2.57 p.m. confirming that it was in Compartment 1, about 0.25 acres in extent and asking for assistance from Collier/Wanneroo. The Collier gang (Overseer Feast and 2 men) arrived at 3.15p.m. as did Inspector Hewett and the running fire was stopped by 3.45 p.m. CAUSE is Unknown.

A moderate westerly breeze helped the early spread of the fire, and caused a number of hop-overs including one almost 4 chains from the fire and in Cpt. 2. At about 3.10 p.m. the wind veered South West and decreased in strength.

1. Outside Assistance.

This fire was not treated as a full scale Red Action and notifications were :-

1. Collier Plantation - Duty Officer
2. Wanneroo Division
3. S.F.C.F. Ashcroft - not available.
4. Inspector Hewett

Heavy Duty units plus manpower were made available from Collier and Wanneroo and arrival times of all units were recorded as follows:-

Somerville Gang (O/S + 2 men + H/Duty)	1457	hour
F/Ranger Bukelis (Light Duty + 1 man)	1458	"
O/S Feast (H/Duty + 2 men)	1515	"
Insp. Hewett	1517	"
F/G Haunold (Wanneroo H.D. + 1 man)	1550	"

2. Suppression Methods.

Compartment 1 is 41 years old P. pinaster of the Land race and of average quality. It has been thinned to approx 70 trees per acre and has been control burned in the winter of 1966. Under these conditions a direct attack on the Head fire with Heavy Duty units was used to knock down the fire and all for use of hand tools to tidy up the edge. After the head fire had been knocked down units worked down the North Wester flank then the S. Eastern flank. A number of spot fires occurred, mainly within $\frac{1}{2}$ chain of the head fire and one approx 4 chains from the fire.

Somerville Fire 16/11/68 (continued).

3. Mopping up. - Commenced at 3.45 p.m. and it was decided to let the Wanneroo H/Duty arrive since it was already within a mile of the plantation and both of the existing Heavy Duty units were nearly out of water. A complete wetting of the area was carried out together with raking-up and breaking-up heaps around the perimeter. Although the area had been previously control burned two factors added to the difficulty of handling the fire, viz, generally dry grass throughout, and a deep soil and needles "Duff" layer. This duff layer is generally two or three inches thick and smoulders for some time with little show of smoke or flame and appears to have a different fire behaviour than duff under unburnt needle and branch litter. The admixture with bone-dry surface sand made wetting difficult.

Mopping up finished at approximately 6 p.m.

4. Damage to Forest.

The area burned has been estimated at 0.47 acres and included 24 trees, each with an estimated volume of 16.1 cubic feet U.B. - a total of 67.6 cub.ft. U.B. Only five (5) trees appeared to be severely crown scorched and a re-assessment of damage will be required in a few weeks time.

5. Weather.

Time	Temperature	Rel/ Humidity	Wind	F.D.I.
1300	73.5°	54%	W.10-15mph	1.08 Green
1400	73.8°	56%	W.10-15 "	1.08 Green
1500	73.0	56%	W.10-15 "	1.04 Green

6. Suppression Costs - Will not be known for some time but an approximation has been made.

a) Fire fighting man-hours 25 @ \$1.50	\$34.50
b) 120 miles for vehicles @ 12 cents/mile	\$14.40
	<u>\$48.90</u>

7. Observations.

- 1) The O.I.C. and men from Somerville are to be commended for quick effective action.
- 2) The use of Somerville Towerman as despatcher worked fairly smoothly.
- 3) The behaviour of duff-fuel suggest the need for more investigation of detergents in pine fires.

PNH:ML
COMO.
18TH NOVEMBER, 1968.

P.N. HEWETT,
INSPECTOR.