
Title

Submission details

I am making this submission as

Other

Submission type

I am making a personal submission

Consent to make submission public

I would like this submission to remain anonymous

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

I served in the Navy 1964 - 1973 and was trained to fight fire during recruit school and received follow up training at various times during my service.

From 1975 - 2010 I was employed by ExxonMobil (an oil company) and received much more fire awareness and fighting training. I became a trainer for a period when managing country distributors.

Summed up, I know what causes fire, how to prevent and how to extinguish.

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#).

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

One of the main causes for fire during 2019-2020 according to news reports was arson.

The underlying contributing factor to arson is a lack of community care and poor to no discipline standards for young people which should be taught during their formative years. {Many young people today would become better citizens after serving a few years in the Army, Navy or Air Force}

There needs to be serious penalties for individuals caught lighting fires during the fire season.

In the case of juveniles, parents should carry some responsibility for what their children do. This would encourage parents to be more responsible with regards to the whereabouts and activities of their children and consequently help to reduce incidents of arson committed by those under 18 years of age.

1.2 Preparation and planning

This, in my view, is our weakest point. We do not prepare adequately during autumn and winter for the next summer bush fire season.

There are restrictions regarding clearing and removal of combustibles, usually enforced by over enthusiastic bureaucrats at local council and based on my experience, these people lack the "common sense" factor. Their rulings generally prove that. These restrictions have an emphasis on the wrong things like protecting wild life or flora. Humans and their homes / assets are not protected based on the attitude and decisions made by these inept people.

Let's cut to the chase here.... If we don't clean up by removing flammable material around where people live, it is going to burn sooner or later. That was proven this past fire season after listening to many stories told by people living on the lower south coast where we lost a lot of homes and other assets. Clearing substantial fire-breaks, especially eucalyptus trees within 100 metres of homes that interface the bush is essential if a fire is to be stopped from entering a residential area. This will also prevent amber fallout lighting bush ahead of a fire front and possibly where fire fighters won't be located to deal with an unexpected flare up close to homes.

Roads and especially main highways should be designed to be fire breaks as well. Trees and undergrowth should be cleared back from all main highways (Princes Highway a good example) on both sides by at least 20 metres so that traffic can pass even though a fire might be present. This helps people to escape fire areas, which didn't happen this past fire season because the Princes and Kings Highways were closed many times preventing people from moving out of dangerous areas. The subsequent problems that emanated from this - people unable to buy fuel and food while local businesses were forced to close - we were very fortunate fire didn't enter an area where people were unable to move to safe ground. The Mogo Zoo comes to mind at this point. Blocked roads also prevent RFS teams from moving to where they are needed or able to change fire fighting tractics at short notice.

Summed up: RFS Captains should have local fire control and prevention authority, not council. Property owners should be permitted to keep their property fire safe without the interference of councils and with advice and guidance from RFS.

1.3 Response to bushfires

We all need to understand that the RFS cannot have a truck and crew in attendance at every fire location. This often unrealistic expectation in terms of "response" would be greatly reduced if RFS was authorised to carry out preparation burning and clearing that they deem necessary to "prevent" fire and therefore improve response times to where their service is actually needed during fires. In addition, RFS staff would have more detailed knowledge of their areas vs. present day. I suspect current arrangements with council and the RFS don't lead to better fire prevention but an undesirable state of "who knows - who cares"?

EG: No clear single responsible organisation = no care.

Sides of rural roads should be a part of RFS responsibility to ensure a safe fire escape for local residents. Sides of these back roads must be kept clear of flammable material. In my area, dead trees actually overhang our road.

Council grades our road (from time to time) and the odd tree is hit by the grader which is left on the side of the road to become fuel for the next fire and for wildlife to suddenly appear from just as a car passes. Or, a tree dies or is blown over to be left on the roadside making fire more likely on an escape route.

The attitude within councils towards rural roads and residents is third grade by comparison to the township area where the majority of locals live. That's got to change!!!!

1.4 Any other matters

Let's remove unqualified people telling the rest of us what we can and cannot do. Too many bureaucrats in councils with a 9 to 5 attitude and a myopic town-centre focus.

Communities are not served well when restrictions are imposed by people who have no idea of what it's like to live in a fire prone area, but are authorised to tell us what we can't do to protect our homes and assets from bush fire.

Supporting documents or images
