



Your details

Title

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A resident in a bushfire-affected area

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

My families property at [REDACTED] burnt to the point of being uninhabitable on 21/12/2019 as part of the Gospers Mountain fire. We have yet to return home. Our first question is how can a fire burn for 2 months before claiming our house and impacting a large town like Lithgow , the emotional torment watching this fire creep towards us over such a long period of time is hard to live with . Our home may be repaired by late in the year so we can move home but the scars will remain and the fear of will it happen again will haunt us. We strongly believe that a changing climate has made the fire risk much worse and more dangerous , we also believe that a total vacuum of policy to confront this added risk contributed to our Black Summer . We see state government agencies stretched beyond their capacity , a federal government that is full of climate deniers and a local council that is tone deaf to any environmental cause. I will address our specific concerns in the Terms of

reference section, I would also like some form of acknowledgement that my submission has been read. The disruption and trauma this fire has caused to my wife ,my daughter and myself has been enormous , we fear going back but it is our only option ,we thought that with the same area behind our house burning only 6 years before that local lessons would have been learnt ,far from learning lessons we feel abandoned .Our property is surrounded by private landholders one being a mining company who have done nothing to maintain their land and who have walked away from any responsibility as a neighbour. We understand that the window of opportunity for hazard reduction burns is much less due to climate change but we cant fathom why this area was over looked for hazard reduction burns after the 2013 warning shot was fire at Lithgow ,how can an overgrown finger of bush land running into a residential area be not noticed as a fire risk by the local council and RFS surely if this type of hazard reduction were carried out the chances of property damaged would have been less.

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

The lack of land management by private land holders surrounding our property .We have lived at [REDACTED] since 2002 in that time the only work carried out was immediately after the 2013 fire, the land below our house has changed hands 3 times since we have lived at our property ,in that time there has been no land management of fire risk reductions just 2 decades of weeds and over growth ,I struggle to understand how this was left to happen because of its proximity to residential properties .It was clear the land holders had walked away from any responsibility but it doesn't seem that anyone was holding them to account.

Climate change has contributed to the scale of this disaster .The frequent heat waves ,more drought conditions and a smaller number of days for hazards reduction have made the fire risk far greater

The intensity of the fires around my house were increased by the condition that land has been left in by past mining activity , the smoke on the day of our fire was so great that aerial fire fighting assets could not be used on our property ,we know this because the pilots were staying in the same motels as us after our house burnt and told how sorry their were for not being able to approach our house . The smoke conditions were worsened by remnant coal dumps and coal chitter igniting in the bushland below our house. All over Lithgow is the environmental sabotage left by historic mining activities whose companies just walked away from the mess their left .

1.2 Preparation and planning

Personally we had our own fire plan which was to evacuate ,which we did ,this is a life saving plan ,we are insured which will help us repair the physical damage

We cannot see that there was any planning for hazard reduction from any landholders or government body for the bush land that is at the interface with residential properties in Lithgow, surely targeting this type of area makes sense .

1.3 Response to bushfires

I personally have found the post fire period the must traumatic and stressful time of my life.

No one was prepared for the scale of what has happened .The fact that we constantly have retell our story makes you just want to give up .I don't understand that with all the data collected on

people when you enter an evacuation centre that a follow up call a week later to check on how you and if you need help couldn't be organised ,also council made no effort to contact rate payers affected by fires(their have our details) everything is left up to the victim .We gave all our details to a services NSW person at a community recovery meeting in late January and received a reply email in the 2 nd week of May by that time we had realised that we were on our own and had organised most things ourselves . It was made clear by the deputy premier on a visit to Lithgow that victims are on the own when he said "we want the residents to be the champion of their own recovery".
One thing that has made accessing assist via charities has been the inaccurate Fires near me maps with our house appearing outside the fire map ,this caused us an enormous amount of stress

1.4 Any other matters

It needs to understood that people have no choice but to pick up the pieces of their lives immediately ,modern society doesn't give us a rest break ,so we need in return from all levels of government a first world response to a crisis .What we saw was childish bickering on who was responsible for what ,victims don't care for that rubbish we want to know that we can confidently rely on all levels of governments to work with each other when a crisis response is needed , we stronger rules around how charities allocate funds .We need immediate meaningful action on climate change .And we need the victims to be treated with dignity.

Supporting documents or images
