



Your details

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

I have been a resident in the area for 27 years. At 10:00 on the 7th of November, I got an alert from the Fires near me app, warning of a fire in Hillville, approx. 12kms from home. No further alerts or updates, but was very wary of a southerly wind change as it would bring the fire in my direction. Around mid-day one of my neighbours contacted me to be alter after being notified by the RFS, I kept an eye on the app and could see the fire situation change. After hearing the weather forecast of a southerly change, approx. 19:00 evacuated. This was not a normal bushfire, but a firestorm which created its own weather system. Trees on my 5 acre property approx. 100 years old which have survived normal bushfires were completely destroyed including root systems. We were evacuated for days, thankfully my property survived due to the amazing effort by the RFS.

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

I believe there were many underlying factors to create such an unprecedented fire-storm.

- Approx 12 years ago all hazard reduction has been stopped in the State Forest, combined with the drought this has created conditions where the forest was full of dry fuel.
- No permits for firewood collection of downed trees in the forest
- Once logging is finished in the area they leave piles of wood which should be able to be collected by locals, as its not natural, combined with a lack of hazard reduction/back burning.

1.2 Preparation and planning

I feel there is a lack of community planning and preparation, if the RFS had more funding/volunteers. The community would be better prepared in the future, more people knowing what to do in the situation and having a role to play in assistance, even if it just answering the phones at a RFS centre etc. Look at community training events once or twice a year.

1.3 Response to bushfires

The response from the RFS was amazing with the limited resources they have, once the initial resources were exhausted though there isn't enough backup.

The app and text messaging are great initially but there needs to be a better system in place, what about people without smart phones or if mobile and internet communication goes down. The only sources of information were ABC TV and Radio.

The initial response and support by service nsw and charities were crucial, the access to the mental health line and ongoing support has been very beneficial to me.

1.4 Any other matters

- Disappointed with charities response, been told by some that if you have received assistance or funding from another agency or government you are ineligible from assistance from them, very disappointing, all this fundraising efforts for this fire yet the charities seem to be hoarding the money and supplies for the future.
- All support seemed to disappear at once, there needs to be a timeline and not allow everything to be pulled over night. Give people other options and ongoing support as its not a situation that completely stops on a certain date, there are many people in the area still suffering trauma and will be for a while but support systems have disappeared.
- The fires near me app is good but needs to be updated regularly with a text message/radio warning as well. It should include weather warnings and forecast so the locals in the area who know the conditions are able to use their knowledge to assess the situation.
- More consultation needs to be done with locals from the government, a common sense approach is needed and this can only be achieved by listening to people that are directly effected. This simply can not happen again, by allowing back-burning, firewood collection this will reduce the fuel load in the forests.

- More funding should be available to the RFS and government agencies for prevention, as it will cost a lot less in the long run than the cost of this fire.

Supporting documents or images
