



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

As we have unreliable internet in this area I have written my submission in a word document attached.
Thank you

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Submission to NSW Bushfire enquiry.docx
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Submission to NSW Bushfire Enquiry

I have lived in Dargan in the upper Blue Mountains for 18 years and have been bushwalking in the area for nearly 30 years

I am writing this submission because I felt the need to reinforce the facts that I hope, will no doubt come out of this enquiry. And my hope is that the people leading this enquiry particularly listen to people like Ian Brown in relation to the Gospers Mountain fire as he has decades of experience in NPWS both on the ground and Managing fires and also extensive local knowledge in Fire Research.

I preface this by saying that thankfully our house was spared during the devastating fire in Dargan on the 21st December 2019. Even if we had lost our house my comments would remain the same.

I would never blame anyone involved for anything that happened but there are processes that need to be addressed and I hope they are not 'swept under the carpet'.

The Gospers Mountain fire had been approaching our area for weeks and as it neared we were reassured by RFS, and personally confident that because of the 2013 fire that swept through our area we would not be too adversely impacted. The fire from 6 years earlier was a good 'hazard reduction' and should slow down the progress, which it did. But because of the extreme drought the back burning done to stop the fire did not react how anyone expected and most of the operations carried out from Mount Wilson to Lithgow escaped and got out of control very quickly. This all culminated on the fire reaching populated areas on a day with the worst possible fire weather conditions.

At a fire meeting in the Clarence shed on Tuesday the 17th December the RFS Representative who has lived in the area all his life and has been in the RFS for many years was confident that the fire would not take the same path as 2013 but unfortunately it did. This shows the unprecedented nature of fire reacting to the drought conditions and the impossible position that the RFS found themselves in.

Again, I want to reiterate that I am not blaming anyone, but there is no doubt that the back burning contributed to the wildfire that engulfed our community and destroyed many houses including 7 homes of our local RFS volunteers. I have nothing but respect of every volunteer, RFS and NPWS who risked their lives in some cases to try to contain these fires.

It was unfortunate that on that Saturday there were emergencies in other areas which contributed to a lack of resources for the Dargan/Clarence area. A lot of these resources were over in the area that is now known as the Grose Valley fire which was started by the Mount Wilson back burn getting out of control and jumping into the Grose Valley. This, I think is a well-known fact.

As a cartographer/GIS Mapping person I would like to comment on the mapping of the fires. Because I am familiar with the process involved I understood why the polygons were 'disappearing' for a short time while being updated and I understood why the initial boundaries were so angular and not accurate, but the general public are not aware of these processes which lead to lot of confusion, particularly by people who assumed the maps were 'real time' data. In the future it would be good to give the general public access to the line scan maps available to the fire agencies and for a better explanation of the maps that appear on the Fires Near Me website.

In summing up I feel that the catastrophic fire season was a direct result of climate change and the unprecedented drought conditions.

I hope this enquiry will lead to new strategies to attack fires immediately as soon as they are ignited and a total rethink of how to manage back burns.

I would also like to acknowledge the tireless dedication of NPWS remote firefighters and their Managers. They worked countless hours to the point of exhaustion under very dangerous circumstances, as did the RFS of course. But I wanted to mention NPWS because they have been relentlessly reviewed, and Rangers jobs cut to the bone over the last few years. It is a credit to them that they remain dedicated to protecting the environment when receiving no thanks from upper Management or any politicians. Many who have worked there for up to 30 years have had their jobs downgraded and many have been made redundant. Some redundant employees with many years of fire Management skills came on board as volunteers during the fire because of staff shortages. My hope is that this enquiry will reinforce the need for NPWS employees to be respected and given enough resources in the future to enable them to carry out their core work to protect the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.