



Your details

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 own a rural property in the area of Woodstock, south west of Milton NSW. My property was impacted by the Currowan fire on 4 January 2020, with 80% of my land/trees burnt, fences on 3 sides burnt. The fire came within 1 metre of the building on the property, saved by my neighbours who were equipped with water tanks on utes. I understand the RFS did visit the properties in our area during that night and in the following days to check remaining fire spots. I wasn't at the property at the time but had prepared the property as much as possible to reduce flammable material, and taking valuable items to another location. This seemed a futile exercise given the drought conditions, and the weather conditions particularly during December, January. I have owned the property A number of my neighbours were also impacted by the fire. I am still distressed about what happened and cant quite come to terms with the generosity of my neighbours, and the fact that my building was saved. The circumstances that night sounded horrendous. We are still

cleaning up after the fire, replacing fences etc and preparing our properties to be better placed in the future. I am concerned for the wildlife that usually frequent our properties and the surrounding bush. A lot of my native plantings (now burnt) had been done to attract birds, bees etc. The arrival of the fire on 4 January was preceded by a number of weeks of watching, waiting and high stress, not to mention the physical hazards of smoke. The Currowan fire tormented the south coast during this time and those in our community who worked with fire and in the forests painted a bleak picture about the fire's advance. My neighbour, a forester said in early December to us that the fire would reach us, no question. I am planning to build a house on the property, and have already had a fire impact assessment prepared. I know that I will do what I can to exceed the recommendations in that assessment, but the inevitability of another fire seems certain.

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 would agree with any recommendations to re-assess the 'urbanisation' of rural areas that are high fire risk; and the types of dwellings built in those areas; and re land management - are there better approaches to the burn offs currently employed (if we can have them). This fire season has turned previous understandings on their head - the fact that a fire has been through an area in the last x number of years no longer appears to be a safety factor for the future. My same area near Milton was impacted by another fire 18 months earlier - the Kingiman fire, on a freaky hot westerly wind August day (and possibly a result of an ill managed burn off/illegal burn). The reflection on and employment of approaches used by the indigenous would be very welcome.

1.2 Preparation and planning

While the RFS has some great tools to help the public keep up with the latest news and any threats, these are rendered worthless without a sound telecommunications infrastructure; and of course power availability. Police and infrastructure authorities should also plan better for evacuations, and road closures. Much of the south coast area has very limited options for alternate travel routes.

1.3 Response to bushfires

My key concern regarding the response to the bushfires is regarding early response. I have heard anecdotally that if a fire starts in a remote area, like the Currowan or Gaspers Mountain fire, the RFS cannot send in aircraft to suppress the fire. Air control can only be done when the fire starts threatening life and property. If this is true, I find it astounding as a risk management approach. Is it only about funding? Surely to douse the fire in its early stages would save a whole lot of angst, threat, cost, loss of property and lives, and not to mention the impact on wildlife.

I highly commend the RFS for how they managed an unprecedented crisis this last season - it was an incredible effort, though costly from a number of factors. The Fires near me app was a saviour - I used it constantly.

I appreciate the RFS is a largely a volunteer organisation with limited resources but I am feeling a gap in coverage. I only know from my neighbours, and tags on the front gate that the RFS actually visited my property. Some sort of follow up would be good, to understand their planning, reaction to the fire, how were

we counted in statistics etc.

Should we have community training to plan better for the future?

1.4 Any other matters

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Supporting documents or images
