



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'm sorry for the lateness of this submission but with the pandemic I lost track of when this inquiry was closing submissions. I live in the Bay & Basin region (Shoalhaven). During NYE & the Saturday following when the Currowan Fire was at its worst, we found that it was impossible to get any specific information regarding where local fires were breaking out. Over 30,000 ppl live in the Bay & Basin & it's impossible to evacuate that many ppl. There's really nowhere to go. All roads out of B&B are bush lined ,as is the Highway for most of the way to Nowra, which was under similar threat. Particularly on the Saturday following NYE, when predictive maps showed both areas under extreme threat. We were safer in the Bay & Basin where we have a predominance of bays & beaches to evacuate to. We needed to know if fires were impacting on our local area specifically so we could ready ourselves to evacuate to the water but it was all guess work. The sun was eclipsed by the magnitude of the fires & it was black as night. We couldn't see smoke

coming from anywhere in particular because the smoke was blanketing us in every direction. There was no local information given to local radio stations as has been the practice with fires in the past. We rely on local radio stations to inform us of what's happening locally, but I found out later that news releases now have to be sent to RFS HQ rather than local radio stations. This is dangerous & ill thought out. When fires are nearby or converging, we need to know exactly where they are and their severity & status. I called local RFS about this and was told it was a strategic decision not to tell locals where the fires were breaking out, to stop people getting in cars & driving to the fire site, but it has the opposite effect. People were getting in cars to find out where the fires were breaking out because we were given no specific information via either ABC TV or ABC Illawarra Radio & local radio had no specifics. We needed notice to ready ourselves. I would like the inquiry to look into why local radio stations are no longer given specific information & updates by local RFS control centres to keep local people safe. Centralising it in Sydney RFS control puts us all at risk. We don't need general information we need specifics. I was in the Bay & Basin during the 2001 fires and we knew exactly where the fires were impacting via local radio updates. There was no guess work. I'd like to suggest that local RFS control centres return to the practice of releasing information to local radio stations because that's the only medium we can access in an emergency situation. Radio stations continue to work during catastrophic events. Phones, internet, mobile & power are usually the first to fail in an emergency situation. Especially with NBN that doesn't work if power goes out. The old system had battery back up. Not any more. We are literally cut off. Specific information is vital to survival, especially when RFS crews are spread so thin, we're on our own, especially in villages that have one bush laden road in & out.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images
