

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

Organisation making the submission (if applicable)

NA

Consent to make submission public

I would like this submission to remain anonymous

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

I've a property of 300 acres within the Blue Mountains NSW. I love wilderness and the diversity that nature gives us, not just kangaroos and wombats but the many animals, plants, geoheritage, swamps that provide habitat and geomorphology of the sandstone pagodas of the North-westernBlue Mountains Region (NSW).

To that extent, during the past five years of ownership, I have put a conservation order on the property, removed the stock, revegetated and rehydrated the significant wetlands to assist with the habitat for endangered species like the Giant Dragonfly, Copperwing Butterfly, Quoll etc.

During the bushfire I had two houses burn to the ground, and another two houses lose infrastructure including Solar power, water tanks, septic.

Note that I stayed until the bushfire had come down the hill and RFS advice was to get out now as the only access road would be overrun soon. I left at 12 and the fires burnt through at 2pm.

All the buildings were well prepared for a bushfire with petrol driven fire pumps to rooftop sprinkler systems supplied by dams with plenty of water.

For weeks we had raked leaf and mulch away from buildings for approx 10 metres including removal of plants.

A handover was discussed with the RFS Captain regarding where the fire pumps were, how to start and the sprinkler systems for both on the roofs and strategically placed area sprinklers.

I was asked by him what buildings are highest priority,

(Note. these two were the two damaged buildings but still standing).

The initial bushfire with little wind was slow and actually took two days to come down off the escarpment to the valley floor via a gully however when I left at 12noon, the wind increased resulting in a very hot fire that ran across large open areas and roads driven by radiant heat.

I believe my open areas and road could be classed as excellent firebreaks but nothing was to stop the fire driven by the wind and the super dry conditions.

I have security footage showing reasonably low to no ground cover, and fire climbing trees 30 metres high.

More hazard reduction would have made little difference to the fire at my place. Even if the area was concreted for 300 metres the heat would transit.

Summary is

My fire pumps were never started. For me to start them two hours before the fire they would be out of fuel and stopped before the fire reached us. Not appropriate.

In review the two RFS tankers were caught up elsewhere and only turned up at last minute putting out one building with fire up the verandah.

The other truck I understood did not get the message re available fire pumps and set sprinklers.

It is possible they did see a pump but decided to use their own resources.

During a debrief they advised the focus was on two buildings and the other two (that burnt to the ground) were already alight so although prepared had no firefighters.

Also note that I'm highly appreciative of the fire crews. What they worked on was saved.

Most devastating is my burnt out peat swamp and rain forest areas that provided habitat for natives.

So many dead gliders, possums kangaroos and today the bush is quiet.

My lessons.

Put firefighter information in highly visible place to enable quick starting of pumps and sprinkler.

Install remote video surveillance and electric start fire pumps with remote control so I can activate remotely.

I've learned that fire fighters really only protect assets such as houses.

The RFS should be paid by insurance companies as they are the winners of firefighting protecting (generally) insured buildings.

In that case Maybe we could redirect current RFS funding for fighting remote fires in the bush.

I don't believe there was much effort to put the fire out and in my case back burning was used as the fire approached to minimize additional fire and heat to protect the asset.

We had a couple of days of slow fire in close proximity but inaccessible bushland that could have been stopped with helicopter / aircraft water. Instead we often waited for the fire to approach the asset before deflecting it as it travels to the next place.

If we valued bushland wilderness and native flora and fauna more we would use whatever resources we could to quickly put out lightning strikes before it spreads.

Bring on more water bombers.

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

Climate change must rank as the highest cause for the fires.

I don't think I had significant rain in the previous two years.

Everything was so dry. Walking on grass was crunchy. A fire on grass stubble would have burnt flared and run a mile. Mulch reduction, and fire breaks would not have assisted.

Controlled burns were not possible due to potential bushfire risk.

The action is to cool the planet if that is still a current option.

1.2 Preparation and planning

In my case I couldn't be much better prepared by hazard reduction.

I had a freshly graded fire break that didn't stop the fire but did assist in a back burning start point.

I could have placed directions signs to fire pumps and sprinkler for firefighters.

I could have an electric start remote start fire pump and surveillance to allow me to be more self reliant.

1.3 Response to bushfires

We need to fight fires early before they grow to the size we saw.

I remember watching on the app a small fire in the remote Wollemi wilderness and wondering how they were fighting it. In reality no one was trying to put it out and it was allowed to expand, become uncontrollable and burn my property.

We should admit we have NOT been successful at controlling bushfires.

Good amount of rain put the fires out.

We minimised the fire damage to houses , in which I am greatly appreciate of the work done by RFS.

Another fire truck could have been used and potentially saved my lost houses.

I also highlight that during the fire I only saw RFS.

In the following days I had RFS regularly check for new fires, dangerous trees and clear trees.

Then the same day I had four of the paid firefighter trucks turn up in their clean new uniforms. They advised they were checking on spot fires. I think they were really just having a look at the aftermath as they looked very casual, took plenty of time and no one in any of the four vehicles were seen to add value to the situation. Helping to put out my peat fire would have been nice.

1.4 Any other matters

The bush is slowly returning but the impact on native animals is absolutely devastating.

I want to continue to live in bushland close to nature.

I accept that fires will come from time to time. I revise my insurance values to be more covered in the future

But I don't want more controlled fires. Already there is nothing but hard dirt and there is little habitat for plants and animals to survive in.

Stop the root cause that I understand is the heating of the planet causing unstable weather (climate change)

Give us more water bombers to put out remote fires as early as possible.

Coordinate resources with a better use of the big red fire trucks than as tour vehicles.

Supporting documents or images
