

## Your details

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## Submission details

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### I am making this submission as

Emergency services personnel

### Submission type

I am making a personal submission

### Your position in the organisation (if applicable)

Fire fighter

### Consent to make submission public

I would like this submission to remain anonymous

## Share your experience or tell your story

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### Your story

One of immense frustration and often depression.

I was sent on 9 Fire+Rescue NSW strike teams and was only committed to property protection once. This one occasion was primarily because our strike team leader lost Communications with the RFS and committed our crews regardless. We saved 2 houses that day.

On every other occasion, specifics I have outlined below, Fire and Rescue Strike teams were held for inordinately long periods of time at RFS staging areas, or simply returned to Sydney unused.

My submission is not anti RFS they have an important role and during this Summers bush fire campaign I found the working relationship on the ground pretty good.

However the "protection of turf" has to end, from RFS Divisional command up, there needs to be accountability and responsibility for property loss and use of assets.

## Terms of Reference (optional)

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

### 1.1 Causes and contributing factors

There should be plenty of documentation of back burns that were lost.

Mount Tomah and Picton were 2 that resulted in large property loss.

The reduction in National Parks and Wildlife personnel, specifically the helicopter team in the Warragamba area had arguably a huge impact. I was informed by a former member of that helicopter team, that the Green Wattle Creek fire was started by 2 lightning strikes, which may well have been extinguished at source had the team been in place.

### 1.3 Response to bushfires

Sadly the response of Fire + Rescue NSW was repeatedly hampered by intransigent controllers from the States Rural fire Service.

On 4 occasions myself and crew were held at the staging area, Rugby Park, Nowra and not committed to any area, before being returned to Sydney.

The worst of these occasions was December 31st 2019, when we arrived at staging, Nowra at 5.20pm. We were sent to various locations by RFS Divisional Command, all of which had already seen the fire front pass, in fact an entire strike team was left standing by HMAS Albatross base for 2 hours awaiting tasking. Which, when it came, was to return to Sydney.

We returned to Sydney at approximately 2100 hours....while houses continued to burn in the Nowra and specifically the Lake Conjola area.

This was not an isolated case, but surely one of the worst.

My crew and I were present the entire day, as a back burn was lost at Mount Tomah. By 1400 hours everyone could see the immense column of smoke, only too aware that something was not right.

My strike team was eventually responded at approximately 1830 hours. Upon arrival our first task was to count the lost properties!

These instances are not isolated F+RNSW has far superior property protection capabilities when compared to the RFS. Our equipment, training and experience is simply better suited to property protection.

At some point somebody must look at the terms of section 44 and realise that there is another fire agency on the ground that can contribute majorly to saving property and life. Section 44 is for a "Bushfire area", when major infrastructure, villages and towns are threatened authority needs to be shared with the agency that specialises in protecting that asset. Anything less is short changing the people of NSW and risking their lives unnecessarily.

## Supporting documents or images

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