

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 have a small rural property 6km north of Bemboka. The property was impacted by the Yankees gap fire in September 2018, resulting in loss of fencing and burnt trees. The property was again burnt on January 30 and 31, 2020, in the Werri Berri fire, resulting in total loss of our home, outbuildings, stockyards, fences, machinery and all our personal possessions. We stayed at the Bega Evacuation Centre for 3 nights until we found alternative accommodation. We were in temporary accommodation for 5 weeks until we found something more permanent. Our insurance company were very quick to assess the damage and pay us out. We have received help from the Red Cross and other charities. Friends and relatives have also helped with donations of furniture, clothes and kitchen ware. We are very frustrated at the slow pace of the property clean up program. We have been waiting for three and a half months. We are unable to do much to rehabilitate our property until the contaminated building material is removed. The Bemboka tip has not opened since the fire so we can't do much in the way of cleaning up ourselves. The COVID 19 plague has added to the frustrations of the situation for all bush fire victims.

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 believe the Werri Berri fire was caused by lightning strikes in the wilderness area to our north. The protracted drought and severe winds that we experienced during 2019 made the situation worse. The area burnt in the December/January fire near Bemboka was largely burnt in the 2018 Yankees Gap fire. This leads me to believe that hazard reduction burning in this instance, would not have helped the situation.

1.2 Preparation and planning

My property was well prepared with fire breaks, fuel reduction and fire fighting equipment. The local RFS had provided planning meetings that helped us all prepare for the worst. As it eventuated, the worst was beyond what we believed possible.

1.3 Response to bushfires

The extent of the bushfires across eastern Australia, especially NSW illustrated our lack of adequate resources. No help was available to the Bemboka RFS on New Years Eve 2019. No air support. The Fires Near Me App did not give us the information we needed to know about the progress of the Werri Berri fire, or other fires in the Bega Valley. The volunteers' efforts were heroic but stretched beyond what was possible. The community support at the Bega Evacuation Centre was outstanding. The BVSC support in the the aftermath has been excellent and Mayor McBain's communication to the public has been very reassuring.

1.4 Any other matters

It has become obvious to me that the RFS needs more up to date resources, including more aircraft to cope with the fire fighting needs of the future. National Parks and State Forest resources also need to be enhanced to protect communities especially along the Great Dividing Range.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

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