



Your details

Ms

Title

First name

Annette

Last name

Greer

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 give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

My husband and I chose to live in a Fire Prone area and after moving to this property three years ago we set about learning how to make the house safe and what to do to protect the property ourselves. This included speaking with neighbours who had gone through earlier bushfires. Speaking with members of the local RFS and other fire experienced people. By our first summer at this property we had a fire plan and thought about what options we had to fight fire. There was no threat for two summers so we did not purchase fire equipment etc but we always had our fire plan printed out and agreed to. In October 2019 when the fires started popping up in the State and RFS were stating that it would be a bad fire summer we started prepping our house for being fire protected by purchasing a fire pump, long proper fire hose, clearing gutters, tidying up the whole property from debris from trees etc. By December we were set up and practicing fire drills every fortnight. We also spoke with all our neighbours on what plans they had for the fires. In

Early December we openly talked about how we will be directly hit by any fires from the West and what our action would be.

On New Years eve 2019 at 6am we recieved the emergency message from RFS that we were under direct threat. I had already been up since 4am checking the Fire Nears Me app and saw we were under direct threat.

The week prior we were doing our fire drill every two days - checking the equipment and our physical capabilities. We removed all outdoor furniture and had mops, buckets of water etc ready. We had packed our bags and car up the night before and had it ready to make an emergency exit. All our neighbours knew we planned to stay and defend.

At 6am we were all dressed in cotton and fully covered and had masks etc ready. I went around our neighbours and made sure everyone had left or confirmed they were leaving. We had text contact for most of the day.

One elderly neighbour did not have a plan and we all thought she had gone to Canberra to family but discovered that morning she was at home so we hastily arranged her to go with other neighbours and she left safely with them.

All neighbours looked after their own animals etc.

The fire started coming over the hill from a West direction at 8am (approx) from Mogo. It started a grass fire on our property. At a neighbours property at the corner of Dunns Creek Rd and The Rigde Road a neighbour had returned and two RFS small utes arrived to help him. They helped us put out the grass fire and returned to help him. The trees around him went up with fire and his power went out. He had no other option but to leave and so did the RFS - they never checked on us even though they knew we were home.

We were putting out grass and tree fires until 11am when things quietened down. Someone local drove past (we saw no RFS or any other emergency vehicles at all during this time) and checked on us. We had lost our equipment shed at this point and had a fire keep flaring up in a retaining wall next to our garage so we were constantly checking around our house for flare ups.

There were three areas that the fire attacked our house but we put it out.

The fire had attacked us from all directions as it had created its own weather system which we knew about and we even had spotted rain for a very short time. (no, it wasn't from our hose)

At 11am the wind changed and there was a very still period of no wind and almost clear sky.

Then about 11.20am the Southerly hit and the sky went orange and we started getting ember attack again. At 4.30pm we finally had put out all ember attacks and we were able to relax slightly.

About mid afternoon we did see National Park people (the ute had their sign) go through and put tiny fires out around power poles - they did not speak to us or check on us.

Our local roads had all been closed so we saw no more people all afternoon/evening.

We watched two of our neighbours properties burn to the ground - I had to text and let them know. I updated all my neighbours about the situation all day. They were at different evac centres.

I did a walk around the neighbourhood at 5pm and gave everyone an update on what I could see from their driveways. I did not feel safe walking under trees or up to their houses.

During that night I did 20min checks around our property for spot fires but we only had one tree and a power pole that burnt all night and neither were a threat to our house.

At 5.45am the following morning I had been up watching a distant fire thinking it looked like a house, then a HUGE explosion that rocked our house and got my husband out of bed. Three doors along that house had exploded after surviving the day before.

Our neighbours started arriving the next morning after 8am. We met each one of them and explained what had happened. Some were able to return to their houses even though power was out and no one had running water. Most of us had gas to cook on. I

set up a mini evac centre at our place and had clean water, boiled water, buckets for flushing loos and food/drinks available for everyone to use and have a clean place to meet as they slowly assessed their own properties.

Everyone was accounted for and made to feel safe and looked after. The two who lost their homes were able to use friends houses or a caravan. We continued this set up for the next two weeks as we all slowly adjusted to our new situation.

We got power 3 and half weeks later after Essential Energy did an amazing job getting our power poles replaced and power back on (and had a car accident on our property that the Army had to rescue them from - that was a bit of entertainment!).

Overall our neighbourhood is clearing and recovering. Seven properties ended up being total losses in our area and all 7 have purchased elsewhere but most do plan to rebuild in different forms.

My husband and I are very proud we stayed and defended our home. We updated our fire plan to include newly learnt information and we would do it again. We have made small changes around our home to help make it more fire resistant. Such as removing any timber retaining walls and keeping mulch in gardens away from the house.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.2 Preparation and planning

We read all the RFS material available. We purchased high quality fire equipment and spoke to experienced people on what was best to use. We had three emergency exit plans. We listened and learnt and discussed what we were capable of doing - we understood our ages (49 & 52) had to be considered also our mental ability. We were honest about what we could and could not do.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Very happy with the community information out there and our neighbourhood did well because we openly discussed it weeks in advance. Of course we all learnt lessons because so few of us had ever gone through such a thing but overall we all did very well.

Supporting documents or images
