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<b>Title</b>	Mrs
<b>First name</b>	Beverley
<b>Last name</b>	Turner

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Resident
<b>Submission type</b>	Personal

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<b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>	

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<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	Public
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<b>Your story</b>	<p>In December 2019, lightning strikes started a bushfire in the area known as the Gooniwiggall Conservation Area, just to the south of Inverell. Known as the Staggs Lane fire, it burnt out over 1500 hectares before it was extinguished. The area has houses and properties on all sides and is in close proximity of Inverell, a town of 11,000 people.</p> <p>Conditions worsened on Monday 16th December and the fire spread quickly. Those of us in close proximity were told by the police to be ready to evacuate, if the wind turned. Fortunately, a wind change saved us, and the town. However, a number of properties and outbuildings, tanks, fences were destroyed. Many homes and properties were saved by the amazing effort of the aerial water bombers and retardant plane who worked from daylight to dark for weeks to bring the fire under control.</p> <p>There are many older people, including myself, who live in this proximity, who should never have been put through this stress and anxiety. We could see that the fuel build up in the area was</p>
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going to cause a fire eventually, but who would have thought that someone deemed it OK NOT to backburn a conservation area for over 40 years, and seem surprised when it happened?

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**1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

Gooniwiggall Conservation Area was established in the 1970's and has NOT been backburned since.  
Fuel load was enormous  
Fire trails were not maintained and allowed to overgrow, so no access to extinguish the fire was available

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**1.2 Preparation and planning**

Fire was started by a lightning strike, in the middle of the Conservation area.  
Ground crews were unable to access the fire due to the fire trails being overgrown.  
Inverell Shire Council did not provide assistance in the use of dozers and graders to clear fire trails. If this had been done, the fire could have been extinguished in its early stages.

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**1.3 Response to bushfires**

The fire was only extinguished due to the dedicated work of the water bombers and helicopters. Their work was amazing and should be recognised. RFS ground crews were unable to access the fire, and could only work on the perimeter of the fire.

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**1.4 Any other matters**

Maintenance of fire trails is essential, and those who let trails become overgrown in the interest of 'environment' should be condemned.  
Regular backburning of areas such as this should be mandatory. Local government should be able to use its equipment in the event of a fire to protect properties and provide access trails. The response from Council at Inverell was poor. The only access road on the northern side of the fire, Rifle Range Road was in such poor condition the RFS trucks and equipment had difficulty traversing it.

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**Upload files**

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