

Motorcycle Trip To Colo Heights 3 Jan 2020 Bush Fire Devastation After Mid Dec Fires

By Brian Crowther



Gosper's Peak Fire December 2019

This fire was started by dry lightening at Gosper's Peak In the Wollemi National Park North Of The Putty Rd To Singleton. It took about a week to reach Colo Heights. One resident of Bilpin told me the worst thing was the 10 days it took to get to Bilpin, the waiting was terrible. Personally I found the wait at Kurrajong very unnerving. By the time the fire was very close myself and my neighbours were definitely very anxious, some were getting very vert tetchy. So when a fires hits you have the drought first, then the above then the fire then the aftermath.

Our Fed PM had ignored all this and advice and went on a holiday, a Hillsong retreat in Hawaii. All right for some.



About These Slides

These were taken on a motorcycle trip from Kurrajong to Colo Heights about 10 days after the fire went through Colo Heights.

About a week later I rode to Mt Victoria via Bells Line of Rd and have added a little information about that.

The slides are mainly Where I deviate from this it is indicated on the slide.

The Title slide with me shows what the area was like 18 months ago.

Comments are added with each slide for that slide. Comments are my random thoughts similar to what I would have been thinking as I took the photo for that slide.

Coming into Colo Heights along Bells Line of Rd



Photo along the road in the other direction

These were taken on a motorcycle trip from Kurrajong to Colo Heights about 10 days after the fire went through Colo Heights.

The fire went on to burn past and through several Blue Mountain Towns and come very very close to Bowen Mt and Kurrajong Heights (in their back gardens). Mt Wilson, Mt Sterling, Bell, Mt Tomah, Tomah Botanical Gardens, Bilpin, the town near Bilpin beginning with B. I counted 7 houses burnt along the Bells Line of Rd when I rode through there on 20th Jan. One café was burnt, several orchards badly mauled,. Darling Causeway's landscape was flattened. Often the only bits not burnt were areas immediately around a property. Many rainforest gulleys were completely burnt. The area around Bell had been burnt a few years ago and the fire experts are amazing they burnt as it is considered they have not enough fuel yet. Trees were dropping leaves prior to the fires as they were stressed by drought. This provided the fuel in these circumstances.



The Significance

The wildlife of Australia is unique. Not only does it represent the culmination of 3.8 billions years of evolution. Evolution that is stored in the genetic bank of our wildlife. It is also unique because it has evolved separately from the other continents for over 200 million years, since it broke away from them in the supercontinent Gondwana. It has evolved as Australia has migrated north due to tectonic plate movement to hotter latitudes. It has survived this and evolved through climate changes in and out of ice ages. Our rainforests are remnants of the original Gondwana forests. As far as I am aware the most severe conditions were cold dry ones of the ice age and we have never had hot dry conditions like those we are experiencing/headed towards.

If this habitat is destroyed the unique genetic store goes with it. These precious and unique species, along with all that evolutionary story will be lost, FOREVER. Just to drive the point home, this is what the Nazi's under Hitler were attempting to do to the Jews during the Holocaust. Literally, plus eliminate their society, long history and culture.

Australia was colonised just as the Industrial Revolution took off. It and European settlement of the continent have in 200 years bought us to the pint of destroying our wonderful inheritance of huge values of natural of Australia.

How can we be proud Australians on Australia Day when this is what we have done and continue to do? NOT ON MY WATCH. We must act now to stop this damage continuing by getting to zero CO2 emissions. Only then can we have a hope of stopping or reversing this terrible process. Resilience and adapting are meaningless stupid denials of what is taking place and needs to be done.

Shows the hills in the background completely burnt.



RHS, Ditto, from same spot on other side of road.



Melted beer cans on side of road.

The fire was very very hot. We had white ash fall at Kurrajong. I read that this is a sign that the fire is burning at over 1000c. On RN radio I heard that the fires in the Blue Mountains were so hot that not only were the rainforest gulleys burnt the soil fungi that is fundamental to that ecosystem's recovery is killed. That means apart from the fact that rainforest cannot sustain fire its even harder to re establish the rainforest.

I imagine this is the lyre bird habitat. Apparently (Guardian) as a result of these fires this may place the lyre bird on the threatened species list as so much of its habitat has been destroyed. It is the logo of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the artist who drew it is a friend of mine. [REDACTED]. Very old now. I doubt when they decided to use it they never imagined this. It is also on the 10Cent coin.



He extent of the burning

Nearly all in the background. Road up from
Colo River to Colo heights. It gets worse



“It’s a sign”.

But not of the messiah. Maybe Scotty believes in miracles but none to be seen here. Just the result of the 2nd law of thermodynamics and chemistry and physics.

I’m writing this on Australia Day to do something meaningful rather than jingoistic stuff we are told to do. Me writing this shows real Australian values, values of actually loving the country and the planet. Which, given this and the policies that cause it in the face of scientific advice, how can the LNP State and Lib Govts have any claim to having Australian values. Unless.....



Another sign

Of climate change due to poor policy
allowing too much human induced CO2 in
the air.

Passing laws against protesters does not
seem to stop this. Funny about that!!!!



Thank god for that!!!

See next slide.

This is a sign!!!



UNDER THE STRADERO
THE COLO-BRA-TREE

DZD 44

The “Colo Bra Tree”,
survived. Yeah!!!!

Beside the petrol station at Colo Heights

This does not show it that well but if you look closely at the trees in the background you can see that the fire went through them. It is like this all around the “good bits” at Colo Heights.

The fireries did an amazing job. You just have to take your hat off to them when you see the state of the bush and what it is like and that they were able to save so many houses.

Thankyou!!!



Well, that is optimism

Or is it. This tree is actually in flower. It is on the edge of the bush on the previous picture.

I rode up here in spring. It was really beautiful. Nearly all the trees were in flower and it brought tears to your eyes to see I, re the beauty. I think the trees were probably under stress with the drought and putting out huge amounts of flowers. Then they dropped their leaves and bark to cope. Mine did that in my garden.



Well, this bought tears
to my eyes!!!!



I was riding along crying. It felt a bit like when my first wife died. It must be a sort of grief. Just terrible. I have been told by councillors that it is important to be able to deal with this as it releases hormones that counter the adrenalin and avoid depression by protecting the sheaths around the nerves which the adrenalin, if left too long attacks the sheaths and does permanent damage. So don't ever think you're a wuss if you cry. It's healthy, well not if it's at the drop of a hat I guess. I let you imagine how these strong feelings translate to our Govts, who I hold responsible, along with the stupid voters who get duped by them. If they are not duped and still vote for them, I can't begin to tell you what I think of that.

This slide is out of order. It is on the way back to Colo River from Colo Heights. Next ones back in order.

This house and its bus business was surrounded by fire.

It was saved. **Good.**

It belongs to my Friend [REDACTED], who is, or was when I was there, the head of [REDACTED]. We worked together on the selection panel for staff. Me as The Fed Rep/Staff Rep.

The kids will be pleased that the buses were saved so that they can get to school. From here some have to get up at 4.30am to get to school on time. It is a long trip.



The next door property.

The fire came up to Colo Heights on all sides. The town is on a ridge and so the fires comes up both sides to the town.





Here the fire must
have just jumped the
road.

Next slide.



Danger after the fire has gone through.

Roads are often blocked after the fires for fear of falling trees. The Bells Line of rd still has a 60km/hr limit for this reason.

The hollows in trees can harbour fires inside them after a fire has gone through. If the wind picks up, the bush fire can re start. Or the tree can slowly weaken becoming a random danger to passers by. This one has been tagged.

Hollows formed by fires in old trees often form valuable habitat for birds like cockatoo and rare possums and endangered wildlife. Eg sugar gliders. We need to be careful about how we handle our forests,



Hazard Reduction Prior To Fires

- With global warming due to human induced climate change due to CO2 emissions the time in which traditional, as in modern, hazard reduction techniques is reducing. The authorities claim there is not enough time get all of it done in time for the start of fire season.
- The NSW Fire Commissioner said that the fires have been so intense due to drought that no amount of fire hazard reduction would have made a difference.
- That techniques like putting in defensive lines by ahead of the fire back towards it have become dangerous in these “catastrophic” conditions. That is how the Gosper fire was enlarged south of the Bells Line Of Road.
- Many people are claiming that traditional indigenous techniques are the way to go. I am cautious on this. It needs to be properly researched, as after all, there is a lot of evidence that their fire techniques caused the extinction of much of Australia’s mega fauna. Some are still around, like the large kangaroos and emus.

Colo Heights Primary School

This is one of Hawkesbury High Schools feeder schools. I remember first seeing some of “my” Year group when we visited the school to prepare the primary school year 6 children for Hawkesbury High.

I saw them through all of their 6 years at Hawkesbury High School as their year advisor. The children from Colo Heights PS were a wonderful cohort all with unique things to offer. Coming from Colo Heights made them very independent, in my view, resourceful and adaptable kids. A real plus for Hawkesbury High.

I am glad most of Colo Heights was saved plus the Primary School.



The locals are grateful to the RFS

Note the Christmas decorations. Mixed blessing in the way of Christmas pressies. Fires, negative, being saved from fires, positive.



The following slides are the ride back from Colo Heights to Colo River.

Next two slides.

Total devastation as far as the eye can see. To the horizon.



A hot slide

Melted road sign (aluminium, look up the melting point for aluminium and that will give you the temperature of the fire at this road sign).



The difficult country to fight fires.

I was told last Wed, the 22nd Jan, that the Gosper peak Fire is still burning. It is in the gulleys south of Lawson and Wentworth Falls and the firemen can not get to it. At that time if the wind came up then the Blue Mountains suburbs along the Great western Highway could come under threat. This was from a RFS man.

Luckily that has not happened,....



Some random stories;

People in my street on the day the fire came very close to Kurrajong were listening to the CB radio and could listen in on the fire truck radio communications. They said some of the conversations were blood curdling, really scary, re the terror for the fireries.

Some info is from an insider I know. That two trucks at Bilpin got caught out as the fire passed. The crews had to shelter in their trucks. One truck was out of communication for about 20 mins and the other for several hours. While they were out of contact the worst was feared. They were OK.

On that day it was still. All the neighbours were out o the street really anxious as the embers came down. It was about 46C, the sky was a dark orange, we knew the fire was just over the hill behind us (it had got into the gardens at Kurrajong Heights).

We had been told to leave or stay to protect our houses, especially from embers that get carried forward of the fires by the convection currents created by the fires and rain down on your house. The road was blocked up to the Heights and from the Heights to Bilpin. So people in Kurrajong Heights were cut off. The jet, helicopter and hurcules water bombers were flying about. At one stage I saw an empty helicopter water bomber silhouetted against the orange, smoky sun. my neighbours had their relatives from the Heights staying with them as the relatives could not get back to their homes. Some neighbours left to stay with friends etc.

Contd;

During the day I had gone shopping with my daughter and her 16 months baby. She lives in Kurrajong as well. When we got home in the afternoon, it was as previously described. We had put Classic Fm on as the baby likes this. She had gone to sleep. So my daughter took the shopping down while I sat in the air con with the baby and the music. On came the Christmas Carols program. It started raining white ash, it was orange dark sky, still, 46c and the song that came on was, "I'm Dreaming Of A White Christmas". I'm from London, I laughed my head off, silently.

The residents of the Bilpin and Putty Rd etc were told they could get shelter at North Richmond Panthers Club. The radio said like other places there were councillors for trauma etc. I'm a bit angry at this. An insider said two officials had a conversation about what to do re evacuation and telling people. The problem was that if they used the word evacuation the state had to provide services at the place worked out. Now there was an issue deciding a place. But more importantly, they didn't use the word evacuation so the state did not have to provide anything. They were very pleased with themselves.

The council said it would provide councillors. Well, actually they refused, I say again, refused, they insisted on providing chaplains. I kid you not. My neighbours were bonkers after weeks of drought and increasing water restrictions. Preparing for the fire was very hard work. As it slowly made its way towards us. It took about 2 weeks to get to us. They were already tetchy and doing irrational things. Then if a fire did come and they did go to the Club they would be confronted by chaplains who were slavering at the prospect of getting converts. I tell you, I would tell them where to go.

Contd;

The club manager was excellent. He arranged all sorts of things for any arrivals.

The State Liberal member did this. Turned up with vote liberal posters. When a volunteer told her what where he would put them if she displayed them she put the pile upside down facing the public at the reception desk. I'm repeating information here so there maybe minor errors, but I'm sure you get the point. A advertising opportunity. Nothing like a substitute for real solutions like cutting greenhouse gases.

A Bilpin motorcyclist I see sometimes. Said he got very stressed the worst thing was the wait. He ended up in Hawkesbury Hospital with a suspected heart attack, it turned out to be kidney stones.

The last is an ex resident of Hawkesbury Heights. She had moved to Bateman's Bay for a cooler climate. She has a brain disease that is progressive and disabling. She evacuated from her house when the fires came though at Bateman's bay. She went to shelter on the headland. But the fireies told them it was too dangerous. She went and sat in the water with her dog and cat in the bay, remember this is 46C and windy. It smoky everywhere. The headland went up in a ball of flame. Then they were told to move as the helicopters needed to collect water from where they were and it was dangerous to stay. She moved to a designated shelter that had nothing in it. They were there for several days.

Contd;

The Hawkesbury Council insisted despite being lobbied not to, having fire works at their Australia Day bash in Windsor and Chaplains and refused requests to desist from this. Plus despite being asked to have proper qualified councillors for fire victims they did not provide them. They had a section concentrating on honouring people involved with the fires, so fire victims could well have been present. If you have had a fire wreck your town or burn your house down or had a traumatic evacuation, would you want it marked with fireworks. Silly billies.

Well, that's about it,

I will leave you to draw your own conclusions re the spin we get and what really happens and who the heroes and who the ????
Are.

I could add political background here and all the lead up to this disaster that leaves our leaders, not leaders at all. Now they try to give medals etc. Personally they make me feel sick and it undermines any interest I have in watching them on Australia Day and who gets what honours. It takes away much value of the day for me. Certainly for any jingoistic nonsense from conservative pollies. The values this really represent is one of hollowness and insecurity hiding behind a chauvinistic façade/parade. The emperor is nude. That's another story.

Postscript 3rd Feb 2020

It is now 5 weeks since the fires encroached on Kurrajong Heights and 6 and a bit weeks since they ripped through Bilpin.

This photos were taken today to send to the guys that made the shirt, [REDACTED] This is on Bells line of Road, the large one outside the burnt out Tutti Fruity Café and the small one about 500m back towards Kurrajong at the Pie In The Sky Café.

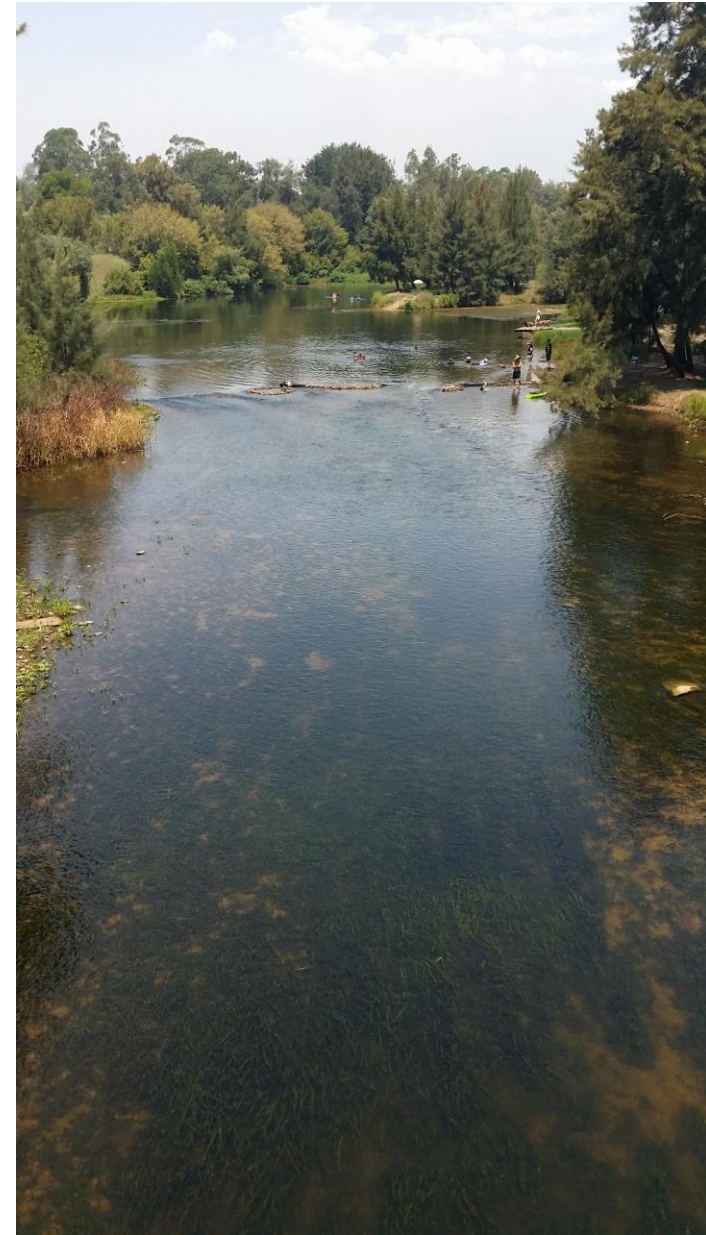
The following photos are to demonstrate that once the fires have gone through the damage continues to mount. It does not just end with a fire. In many ways it is the beginning of further damage before an ecological equilibrium is re-established. It may take 100's of years to get to be close to its original state and may never reach that state at all. They were taken within a half hour interval of each other on the 2nd Feb 2020.



Photos at the Confluence of the Hawkesbury, Nepean and Grose Rivers

The Hawkesbury and the Nepean Rivers are really the same river flowing south from near Goulbourn to Broken Bay. The name change occurs at the confluence between this river and the Grose. The Grose is flowing from a large catchment that extends right up to Mt Victoria. It flows east to west to meet the Hawkesbury/Nepean River at Yarramundi just south of North Richmond.

This picture is from the Yarramundi Bridge just above the confluence looking south. It shows very clear waters flowing south from the Goulburn direction.



Grose River at Yarramundi Reserve

Looking west just upstream from the confluence.

This river is normally absolutely clear and pristine. This discolouration is due to huge amounts of sediment being eroded from the burnt landscape of the catchment. This has appeared since the recent rains. I have never seen the river like this before after rain events, even when in flood. This moderate level of the river with a huge sediment load shows that the fire has destroyed nearly all vegetation that was holding the soil together.

The Hawkesbury Sandstone bedrock is very devoid of nutrients and contains very little clay. The soil being lost is the distillation of millions and millions of years of wearing down of layers of rock. This is being lost and cannot be replaced, EVER.



At the Confluence of the Hawkesbury/Nepean River and the Grose River at Yarramundi.

Here you can see the contrast of the Grose with its heavy sediment load and the Hawkesbury/Nepean with almost no sediment load. (technically the Nepean at this point).

How far light can penetrate water is called turbidity. The higher the sediment load the greater the turbidity. In this case along the Grose the huge turbidity will be blocking all light and therefore stopping any growth of water plants. The basis of the ecosystem, ie food at the bottom of the food chain, is thus destroyed and the river dies. Also in the very short term, the fish just get their gills clogged up and die. Unless they can find clear water at the bottom of deep pools. Highly unlikely.

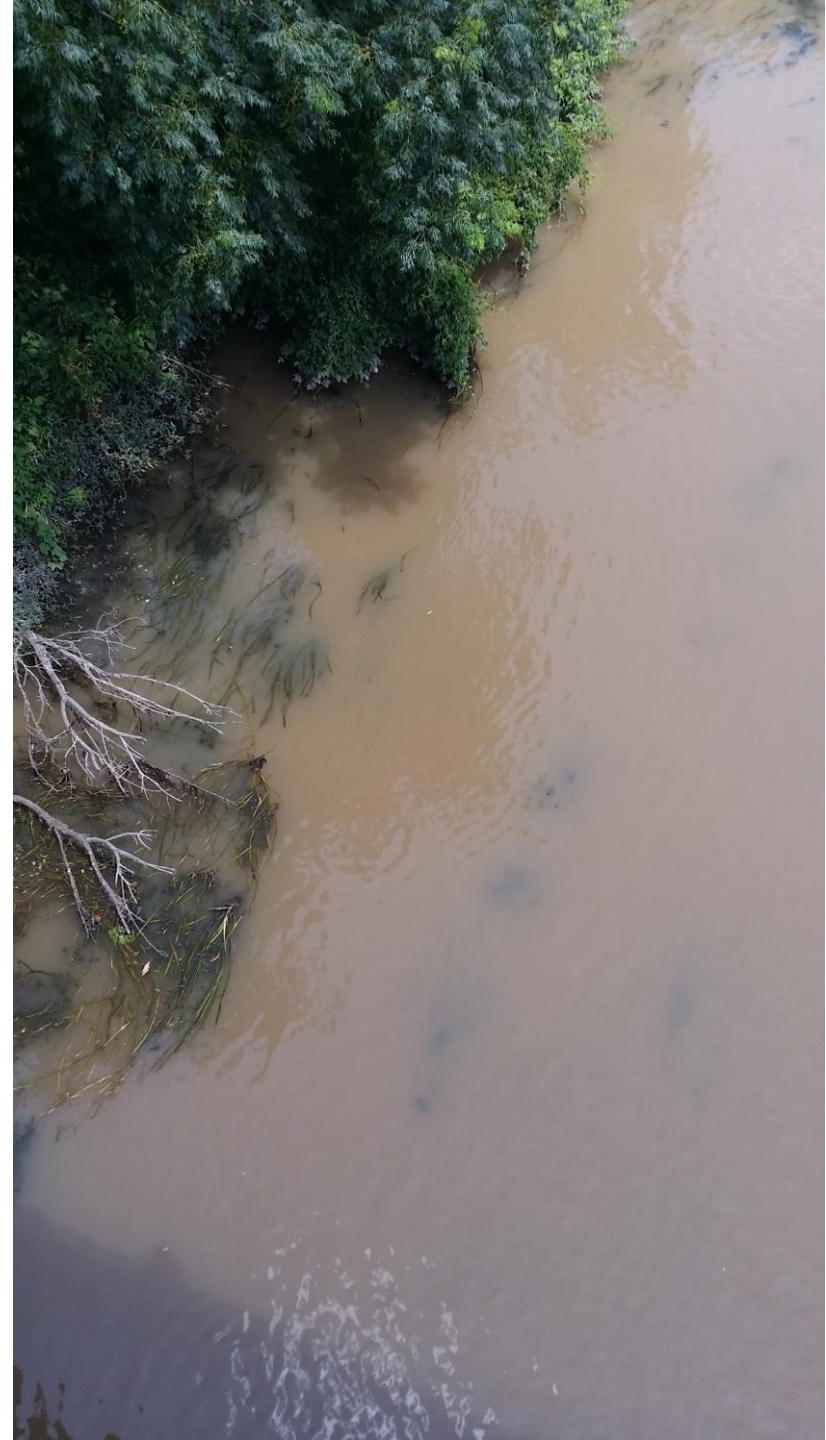
So the fires not only destroy the ability of the land to recover via soil loss they result also in the slow destruction of the waterways.



Downstream of the Confluence of the Hawkesbury/Nepean River and the Grose River at Yarramundi.

So the clear river upstream of the confluence with the turbid Grose River turns into this downstream of the confluence. This was taken at the bridge over the Hawkesbury River at north Richmond on Bells Line of Road.

Killing water plants and fish downstream. I caught just a snippet of a radio talk on Radio RN. I was on my way out so could not stay and listen to all of it. I got the impression it was the oyster farmers downstream complaining of the sediments destroying their oyster farms. I can not be sure that this was it but am pretty sure. This would be the case. I doubt they know that raising the Warragamba Dam wall, as proposed by the State LNP, will also devastate their farms. Bet most of them vote LNP, silly billies. I got this from the old EIS for the dam wall options written in the 1990's.



The Hawkesbury River Looking South Towards The Confluence With The Grose River.

Just full of sediment. As shown in the above pictures this all has to come from the results of the recent rainfall event in the Grose River. It just gives an indication of how massive the destruction must be. Also that the MASSIVE destruction continues well after the fire is out.

On a geological note all these sediments will be dumped in Broken Bay near Gosford and will form layers of sediment to become, in time, compacted, dewatered and cemented to lithify into new layers of sandstone and shale. These rocks will be part of the big @#\$# up called the Anthropocene, for future generations, {if we are very lucky, (maybe aliens, at this rate we will be extinct)} to study the effects of idiocy preserved in the rocks. Technically these will be fossils of us, "traces of living things found in the rocks". One big huge fossil in layers of rock showing just how idiotic humans WERE, complicit in their own suicide and responsible for producing the world wide mass extinction that will be recorded in those rocks and around the world.



Why Is The Nepean River Clear and The Hawkesbury River Very Very Turbid?

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Upstream there is no sediment load because the Nepean River has either not had rain or enough fires to do so much damage. However, The Gosper Mountain fire did cross into the Jamison Valley, plus there was a very big fire in the Tahmoor area. All these are within the Nepean River catchment. These areas like the Grose would have had the same rainfall event. The difference is, although they are all feeding tributaries of the Nepean (just like the Grose) they all feed into the Warragamba Dam. So the Warragamba Dam is catching loads and loads of sediment that is running off the soil, which is bear due to the fires, just like in the Grose. The dam's lake would be filling with sediment, thus keeping the water flowing out of Warragamba into the Nepean River clear , thus keeping the water flowing out of Warragamba into the Nepean River clear.

A note a dam on the Grose River would not save the oyster farmers from huge negative effects on their oyster farms because changing the flood regimes is what raising the Warragamba Dam wall does. This change of flooding etc moves good suitable ecological sites about Broken Bay in unpredictable ways. There are lots of other negative effects. Again that is another story but related.

Merry Crisis!!!

Its not over yet.

Fires continue in Southern NSW and Canberra. Several houses were destroyed this weekend as a result. The picture on the next shows the smoke coming up from those fires towards North Richmond. You can see it as that dull brown haze in the lower part of the sky. Its back!!!

To be continued, no doubt!!!



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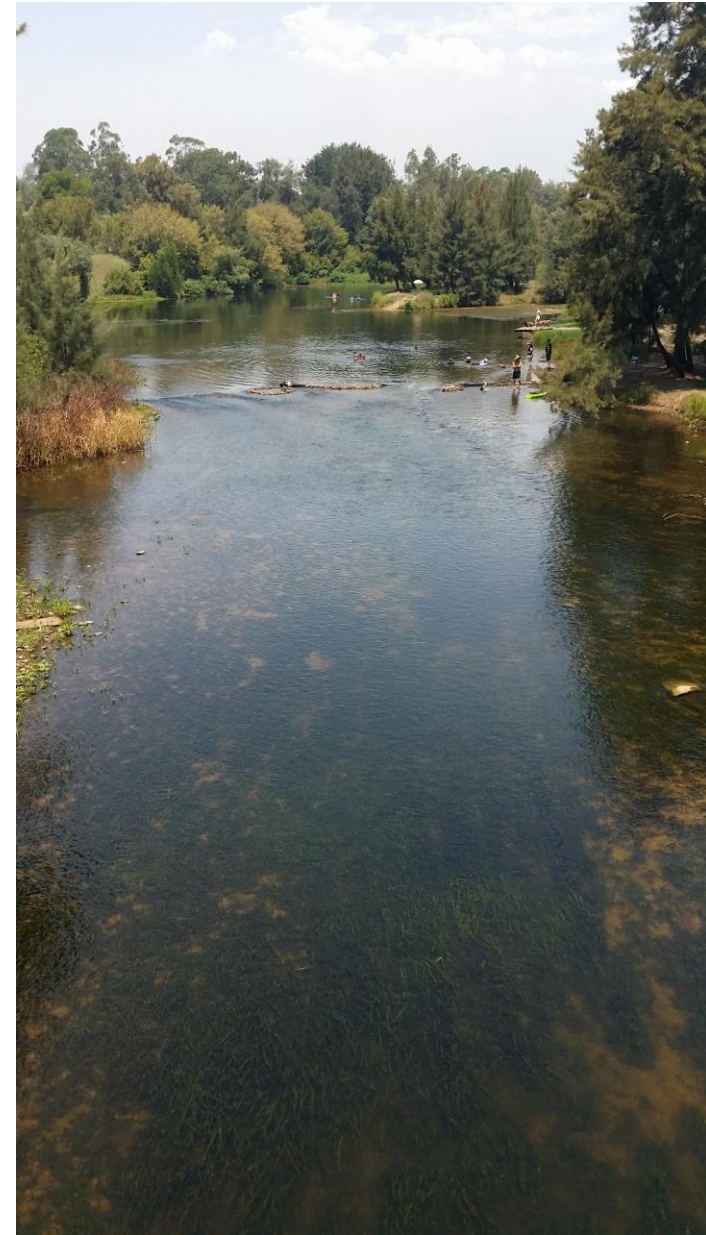
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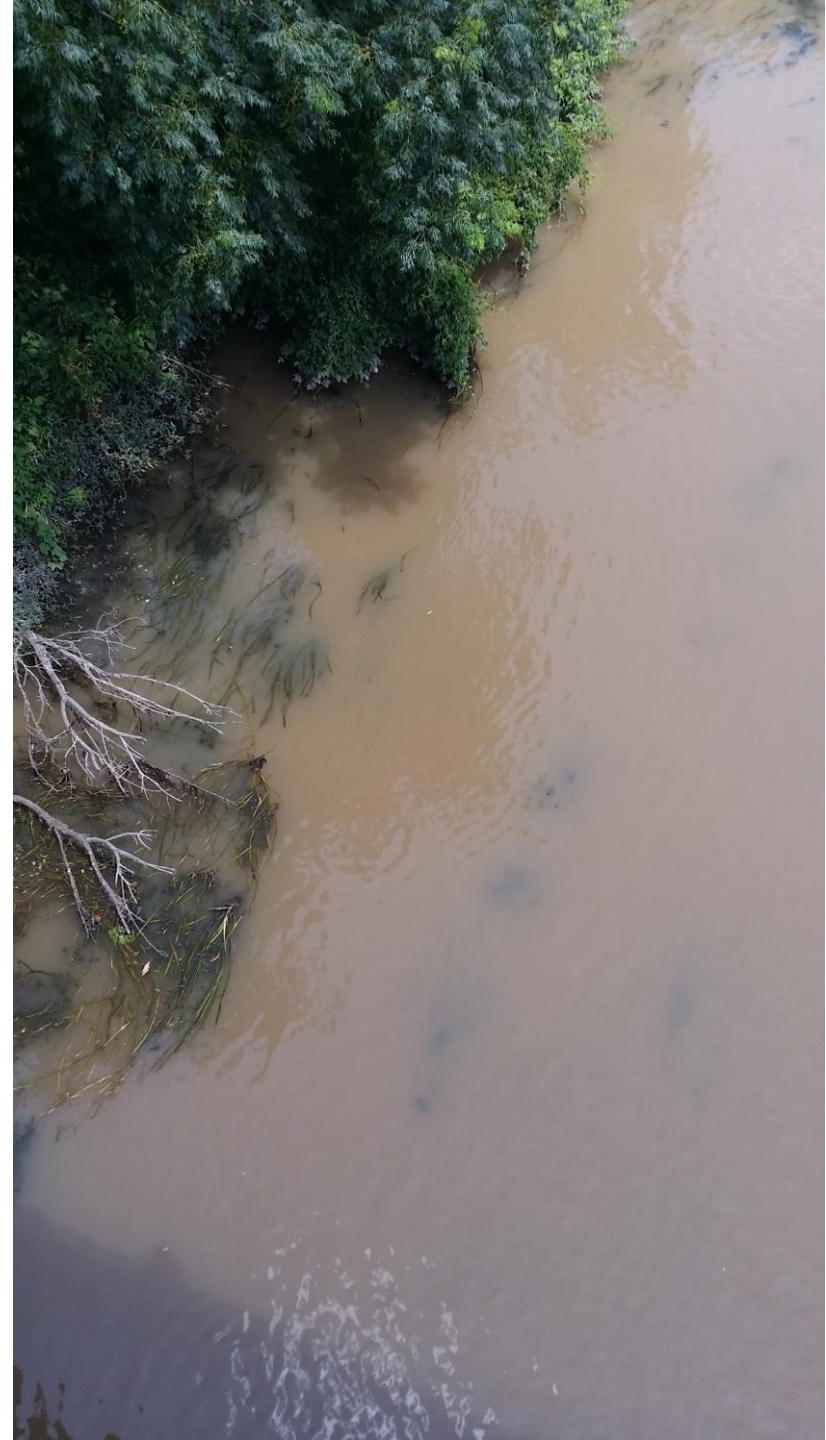
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Going To Have a “SCOMO” now!!!!

A SCOMO is a special “smoko”.

It is one you have;

- Knowing a crisis is looming.
- That you take to avoid dealing with the crisis, hoping it won't be as bad or something turns up to let you off the hook.
- Where you can pray for miracles re to the above, to get you out of trouble.
- At some else's expense (taxpayers in his case).
- When you lie, saying that you weren't aware a crisis was looming, that you were not told when you were.
- When you literally do nothing practical to deal with crisis while having your SCOMO.

I can't have one at the moment as there is no crisis I know of that I need to avoid. Rats.

- Oh yes, the crisis is one that you have actively helped make happen.

Most of the LNP would have been taking SCOMO's at that time.

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Most of the LNP would have been taking SCOMO's at that time.

Overlooking the Grose and Hawkesbury/Nepean River Confluence at Yarramundi.



During the 2004 fires I witnessed a bush fire rip (very fast) across this farm. The horse were in the fields and the fire was moving though the grass in the fields the horses were in. The horses were panicking. I was trying out my new kayak. When I got it in the water and was paddling up the Grose the fires had got to the trees along the river bank and were travelling (vert fast) along the trees. It was impressive to witness. Lots of heat (a hot day), smoke and flames. Horrible. I was not in danger.

Merry Crisis!!!

Its not over yet.

Fires continue in Southern NSW and Canberra. Several houses were destroyed this weekend as a result. The picture on the next shows the smoke coming up from those fires towards North Richmond. You can see it as that dull brown haze in the lower part of the sky. Its back!!!

To be continued, no doubt!!!

