



I am making this submission as	Other
Submission type	Organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Bungonia Progress Assoc, Inc
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	President
Consent to make submission public	Public

Your story

Bungonia is recognised as a fire prone area. In December/January the area was threatened by both the Currawan and Jacqua Creek fires. In 1965 and 1985 the village and surrounding farms suffered tremendous damage. Several historic buildings were lost in the 1985 and some farms were almost wiped out. I would like to focus on two areas - the Mountain Ash Range for want of a better description which is the range of hilly country SE of Goulburn running approximately north south and the village of Bungonia. There has been no systematic prescribed burns on the Mountain Ash Range that I am aware of in the last 30 years. Possibly longer. During this period the trees and vegetation have grown and are so dense I would estimate in many area a fuel load of 50T/ha or more is present. Most of this land is privately owned. I believe most owners would welcome some government body organising and carrying out a systemic program. Because of the native vegetation laws and the State bureaucracy it is impossible

for private landowners to do the work themselves. On my own property I have tried 3 times to address this issue - once as a member of the Bungonia RFS where eventually I was informed I would personally have to take financial responsibility if the fire caused damage outside my property and twice in applications to the CMA where I requested a small area (formally used as a grazing paddock but now bush) be thinned out - this was rejected as it was potentially habitat for allegedly endangered species. I would like to emphasize that this land is Real Property Act and my wife and I are the registered proprietors and we run a grazing property NOT a National Park. Our property rights and our income have been usurped. There are plenty of National Parks in NSW for endangered species but many of these just harbour noxious weeds and feral dogs, deer and pigs. It is time to get rid of the ludicrous legislation preventing landowners managing their own properties to reduce fire risk. This part of my property is located in the Mountain Ash range.

Along Mountain Ash Road many, many houses have been built in the bush. These will not be defensible.

The second issue is Bungonia village. For a long time this was the most southern settlement outside of Sydney and is an historic area. Since the 1985 fire there has been tremendous growth at the southern end of the village and at the western side. In the 1965 fire the bush on the western side exploded and as a result took out many buildings in the village. The roads out of Bungonia are very dangerous in a fire as trees grow very close to the road verge and many will fall onto the road. So the Progress Association would like the village hall to be a "safe place" where locals can evacuate in the event or threat of a fire. It is approximately 30km to Goulburn and 22km to Marulan. The problem is the inordinate quantity of bush in the Lands Department owned "Bungonia Park". It is not really a park in the conventional sense - the southern end is heavily treed almost up to the village hall together with tonnes of fallen branches of all sizes and other vegetation. The western side is heavy native bush which I would anticipate just explode with crown fires and ember attack for kilometres. The Progress Association would like action to reduce the fire risk to the village by clearing the vegetation on the southern approach and converting the area into a mown grass conventional park for at least 300 metres around the village. We would also prefer only deciduous fire retardant trees permitted to be planted by the Lands Department - not eucalypts as is the case now as these trees contribute to the fire hazard. The park is bounded on the southern side by a serious piece of erosion known as Woodward's Creek. The lower portion of this gully should be bulldozed to form a dam so the Bungonia RFS and helicopters have a water source which is easy to access.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

The major problem in Bungonia is the absolute lack of prescribed burns and the restrictions placed on land managers by the Native Veg laws commencing in 1996.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Currently the area of Mountain Ash Range and the village of Bungonia will be undefensible in a large fire as the fire will be too intense for tanker crews and aerial appliances. The only solution is an aggressive program of prescribed burns and knocking over a lot scrub and bush growing right into Bungonia village particularly in the Lands Dept. owned park but also contiguous private properties. The only water source for the RFS at the moment is their limited tank capacity at the rear of their shed and the "soup hole" under the bridge which is dangerous to use and of limited capacity. The solution is a large dam in Woodward's Creek.

1.3 Response to bushfires

The local RFS brigade is adequate to respond to small fires where the area is relatively clear and accessible so that the tankers can be used safely and the crews do not risk their lives

by becoming trapped. In areas where the fire cannot be accessed the alternative preferred by the RFS hierarchy seems to just let the fire burn. An example is the Jacqua Creek fire which started on 28/12/2019. For days it was reported as 1ha in area and then 15ha and eventually it got to over 4,000ha. The RFS strategy was to let it burn to join up to the Currawan fire. The only problem with this was at the time the prevailing winds were predominantly easterly and these would have the affect of moving the fire in the wrong direction towards settled properties. The same strategy of not doing anything appeared to be employed early in the Mount Gosper fire. This needs to be examined.

1.4 Any other matters

The funding of emergency services via levy on insurance policies is flawed. It just adds to the cost of the insurance policy so many people go without insurance. The money necessary for emergency services should come out of consolidated revenue. On the RFS we do not seem to be getting value for money. We were told several years ago now that the RFS cannot guarantee getting to a property in a fire etc and landowners should make their own arrangements. We also know that actual brigades are under funded and have to do their own fund raising. The current model needs examination. It has failed this season and there is no reason to believe it will do any better in the future.

Upload files
