
**Submission to NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry
With regard to RFS 10/50 Clearing Codes**

Caldera Environment Centre welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Our concern are for the environmental outcomes of the implementation of the RFS 10/50 clearing codes when used to address bushfire risk.

The use of self assessment is highly problematic and we have seen unjustifiable clearing to improve amenity with the loss of important habitat. Relevant expertise needs to be part of the process of approving any clearing. Individual landholders can not be expected to first assess their vegetation and potential fire risk and secondly not to act in self interest.

The RFS and approved experts need to be involved to provide rational independent advice as to risk and measures to mitigate. No amount of clearing would have ameliorated the devastation that recently occurred with bushfires around the country. These events require us to look at all the reasons for their increasing occurrence and severity and not look to wholesale clearing as the solution. After 200 + years of habitat removal much of our fauna and flora is in a threatened state. We need to maintain what habitat is left. That doesn't mean managed hazard reduction can't occur.

The RFS 10/50 clearing code relies on accurate mapping which is not available in all circumstances and so the need for ground truthing by experts is important to prevent unnecessary clearing. There should be no clearing in National Parks or Council owned bushland to justify asset protection.

We are sending the wrong message to the community that bushfire risk is the only consideration when managing our natural environment. CEC would like to see a separate inquiry into the RFS 10/50 clearing codes and the effect they have had on the loss of tree canopy.

Regards Cynthia Brook (secretary)