



## Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Corie

Last name

Ross

## 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

I am the husband of a family of 8 living in a rural area that was evacuated. I don't want to discuss the causes, prevention or how to fight fires, but wish to raise concerns of the affects of poor planning and policies. Our issues like many others, were problems related to being left to fend for ourselves.

On 8th Nov we were asked to evacuate due to an impending fire and no resources being available to assist. Like many, we were felt we were self-forced to stay to protect livestock and property. This is where the issues arose that need addressing.

People make the mistake of staying (putting themselves at risk) for various reasons that we found:

- No property insurance (so they'd lose everything if a fire came and felt it wouldn't be worth living afterwards)
- Thought they had nowhere to go (both short or long term)
- Thought they can protect property themselves (not realizing how powerful these fires can be)
- Could not leave stock and animals without trying to defend them

first

-Could not evacuate risky areas due to looters taking advantage of no one to stop them.

In my situation, we followed the NSW Fire App, but this was constantly several hours behind the 8 ball (which although is great ordinarily, it is useless if you are near the frontline). It would have been great to see the app support evacuation centres as we had no idea these existed. We ended up dropping our kids into town with my 17 year old son and the slept in the car park of McDonalds for 2 days before we knew about any centres. Secondly, driving back and forth to keep an eye on them was an issue because the SES and police would refuse entry back into fire area. I was lucky to have an understanding officer that knew he wasn't going to stop me. I had to return otherwise my other eldest and wife (who were still at home) needed me back to help protect the property. This was a ruling that needs attention too.

A major factor to help people evacuate would have been the early assistance from the military via the use of vehicles for evacuees. It was difficult for many to leave themselves without taking at least some photo albums and a suitcase of clothes or something. Many that had a short amount of time, simply had no room, especially when you a a pet dog and the whole family in the car. This simply gesture would expedite the evacuation for many.

Water access was another major concern. Being in a drought, we had barely a drop to spare to protect any animal area, property or ourselves. We were already purchasing water with a 14 day waiting period. Dispatch of water truck fleets would have made a difference to many owners in the area that I know.

After all these extra reasons why people are staying behind, I'd like to note the lack of education through televised media. There was notable coverage and warnings throughout the disaster but what we felt was missing, was instructions of what home owners could do to seek refuge if they ended up being trapped. I understand that we don't recommend people to stay, but it's clear that many do. Maybe it can be worded as such that if you find yourself trapped as such, to seek shelter in a river, underground, in a swimming pool with a fire blanket overhead, a cleared dirt paddock free from scrub for at least 60m in either direction or something to give them advice other than retreating into a flammable house or barn.

Thank you for allowing us to have our say.

## **Terms of Reference (optional)**

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

## **Supporting documents or images**

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