

Your details

Ms

Title

First name

Desiree

Last name

O'Brien

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 have lived on Tantawangalo Mountain road since 1993. My property is surrounded on 3 sides by Forestry Corporation land.

The mountain has not had a bushfire run through it since the 1950s and in the time that I have been there, there has been no hazard reduction burning, maintenance of fire trails or clearance of the fence lines along the forestry side. The Forestry Corporation has allowed trees on their land grow next to and through my boundary fences. I have requested that they undertake clearing of the fence lines but there has been no action taken. I am required to be a responsible neighbour by not allowing my stock to wander or impact on forestry land, but it is not reciprocated by the corporation. This fire did not start on my land.

We prepared our property as best we could and locked it up and left it as we fully expected to lose it. We lost all our outbuilding, sheep yards, water tanks, power poles, internal and boundary fences. The fire burnt up to the verandah piers and on the 2nd house, burnt into the rafters and then stopped. We recognise that we have been incredibly lucky when compare to other people's loss.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

There were decades of fuel load on the ground and in combination with the actual legislated lack of accountability for and inaction by, the NSW Forestry Corporation - the conditions were ideal for a catastrophic bushfire to occur.

1.2 Preparation and planning

I fail to understand how accountable managers in relevant government agencies could no have predicted the outcome that occurred.

1.3 Response to bushfires

I'm advised that there were no fire appliances on or near our property on the day and I understand that resources would have been thin on the ground. What is of interest is that fire fighting teams from the Forestry corporation only fought the fires during daylight hours - they went home each day and left the battle to the RFS and private providers subcontracted to Forestry Corp to fight the operation 24/7.

1.4 Any other matters

Communications (or lack there of) - we are in a Telstra identified black spot for mobile phone communications. Once the power failed, we had no NBN satellite service, so all of the intel via apps such as Fires Near Me are dependent upon either wifi or mobile reception. We had NO situational awareness to enable us to make informed decisions about stay and defend or evacuate. Further more, with a landline failure and no power - there is no redundancy to call 000 (during normal times, let alone during a catastrophic bushfire). We have been previously told by Telstra that it is a business decision not to improve the mobile communications in our area. I believe that an organisation with a monopoly on infrastructure and strong profit margins can no longer make 'business decisions' but must be forced to make moral decisions and provide mobile coverage across the entire continent. I have experienced better mobile reception in remote parts of India than we have some 60km from the coast. I have had (at my own expense) a survey done to assess the likelihood of improving reception and the scope of works is beyond my financial capacity, with no guarantee it will work - I have attached that report for your reference.

Fire trail maintenance - I have 3 designated fire trails on my property for the purposes of fire agencies gaining access to the Forestry Corporation land, NOT my land - those trails serve no purpose to me. I receive no support (either equipment or expertise) from Forestry Corp to maintain those trails that access THEIR land. I have neither the machinery, the knowledge nor the financial capacity to undertake a program of regular fire trail maintenance. Again, this is an example of Forestry Corporation wanting everything and giving nothing in return.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- 3096 Tantawangalo Mountain Road Cathcart NSW_ Desktop Site Survey_27April2018.pdf
 - IMG_2768.jpg
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