

Your details

Title

Miss

First name

Donna

Last name

Layton

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A primary producer

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 was at work the Friday of the fire, a fellow worker came back from lunch and said she had heard a warning about a fire at Nymboida and people were to be prepared.

My partner and I left work and went straight out because we had animals on site.

We filled water troughs and wet things down.

We have no mobile reception, and did have a message on the land line about the fire.

There was nothing about which direction and how bad it was, I rang RFS and they could not tell me any news.

About 3pm we started getting burnt leaves blowing in on the wind, it came over like night and you could start hearing a noise like a truck.

We went to a neighbours to see what news they had and they were not quite sure which direction it was coming

from. We heard an explosion and the neighbour said that was the quarry going up. With the fire that had hit Rappville I thought if it was the same, we had no chance. We decided to leave, I got my laptop and cattle records and the cat. We did not open the gates for the cattle, as we did not know what direction the fire was coming and thought they make run the wrong way and could be worse. by this time the noise was like a freight train coming, we went into Grafton and listened to the ABC all night and at first light went back out to Nymboida. We were told that the area had been wiped out, canoe centre gone all houses were gone. It was the worst drive going back out there and seeing the destruction and bracing ourselves to find our animals burnt and home gone. To our relief our immediate area was not burnt and animals were safe. fire came from two directions on the Saturday and with the help of neighbours, RSF and helicopters we were able to save our house and half our land, and our animals were safe. the fire destroyed most of our boundary fencing and some internal, so we were very lucky. Recovery is hard, as you look at the damage and it is over whelming and that is just with the fencing and some small outbuildings, I can imagine the feelings of people that lost their home and animals, it will take years to recover. some my not, some will never return.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Bushfire inquiry 17.4.2020.docx

Bushfire inquiry

- 1) It was a perfect storm for the Bushfires. With drought, high levels of fuel build-up, regulations that prohibited burning off, heat and winds.

The fuel levels cannot be attributed only to drought, the levels in National Parks, State Forests, Crown lands and private lands have been building up for many years. National Parks especially, due to the complete lockup with no grazing permitted the fuel build up over many years was just waiting for the right conditions for a fire.

- 2) Bushfire planning in NSW was not good enough; regulations make it hard to activate controlled burning as it needs to be carried out regularly to reduce fuel loads to ensure that it does not increase.

Most of these fires started in National Parks and were allowed to burn without combating them and once they escaped from the borders into Forestry or Private Property, the fire fronts were too big to put out.

People waited days for the fires to arrive and even though a lot were prepared and had experienced fires before, the ferocity of these fires had never been seen before. Hence, the massive loss of property and degradation of the land. Causing death of some people, animals including native animals that could not escape.

- 3) In some areas there were just not enough resources to battle the intensity of the fires and a lot happened at night when it was hard to see what to do and where to go.

Public warnings were not good enough, land lines were down, electricity was off and a lot of areas do not have mobile reception and ones that do, when the towers were fire affected they did not work.

In areas such as Nymboida, there were no warnings as to what direction the fire was coming from, how far away it was and no communications.

The Rural fire service was busy fighting fires, and just did not have the resources to communicate with residents.

I assure you by not knowing what to do and where to go and trying to protect home and animals, when it is in the afternoon and it looks like night time and you can hear a noise that sounds like a freight train coming, it is very scary.

- 4) The main item to minimise bush fires is to reduce the fuel load, unfortunately a lot of Government agencies know best and won't listen to local land owners that know their area and have managed their land for generations.

In the name of conservation, by locking up areas; the fires have killed native animals, birds, plants and destroyed assets and people's incomes and lives.

It is best to have controlled "cool" burns that allow animals to get away, rather than these raging fires that are killers.

We need agencies on the ground level not out of University with no hands on experience to be in charge or in command of areas.

Regional fire services should be able to work in their region without approval of the base in a different area, who are not aware of the areas and the lay of the land.

- 5) Preparation should be now, by planning hazard burning and keeping vegetation in check, allowing cool burns and allowing land owners to look after their properties and get assistance from rural fire services.

Also allowing grazing In National Parks to help keep the weeds such as lantana down. They will disturb the ground allowing for new regeneration to grow through.

- 6) No matter what the land zoning is, hazard reduction must be carried out. This will also be good for the land, as to keep weeds such as lantana down and other weed ground cover that native animals such as koalas cannot access the forest floor to move around.
- 7) Not complaining about our Rural Fire Fighters, but some did not have experience in the fighting and prevention of Bush Fires. Other areas were using different fire trucks and did not know how to operate them, which caused some hardship and frustration. Sometime fire crews had to stand and watch a fire “get away” while waiting for instructions from head office. This caused more damage and more frustration to the fire fighters.
- 8) With the millions of dollars donated to the RFS, this should go a long way to improving equipment and by doing more controlled burns, will gain experience to RFS Volunteers.
- 9) The Government must overrule some of their own department (EPA), that make it hard on the land holder or for other departments on controlling weeds or control burning to actually assist in regeneration and animal protection, preventing the wild fires like the ones experienced in summer.
- 10) With the millions of dollars donated to the RFS, hopefully this should go towards more safety equipment and training for RFS volunteers, and not just for a new bar fridge back at the brigade shed for some cold beers.