



Your details

Ms

Title

First name

Elizabeth

Last name

Cameron

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A member of the general public

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 live in the lower Georges River area of Sydney. I value our bushland reserves and the vegetation on private properties for their environmental benefits - insulation from extreme temperatures, shade, habitat for native fauna, carbon sequestration and aesthetics. I have seen a very great reduction in the number of mature trees and extent of garden vegetation in this area in the past 30 years. I am concerned that further vegetation clearing will not necessarily reduce the risk of bushfires, and may even increase the hazard, based on recent research by experts in bushfire ecology.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.2 Preparation and planning

RFS 10/50 Clearing Code

I believe a formal review of the RFS 10/50 Clearing Code should be undertaken, separately from this Bushfire Inquiry.

The Clearing Code is inconsistent with many recommendations of the recently gazetted Planning for Bushfire Protection 2018; the latter, for example, does not recommend clearing on all sides of a property.

In 2014 the 10/50 Clearing Code of Practice was introduced to allow residents to remove vegetation to protect their homes from bushfires. It was so widely abused by landholders clearing vegetation for other purposes that the Code had to be modified only two months later. The seemingly arbitrary mapping of the bushfire prone zones without an actual assessment of the genuine risk, allowed some urban home owners in the lower George River area in 2014 to take advantage of the Rule and remove perfectly healthy native trees and shrubs to facilitate views, and simplify plans for building developments.

I believe the 10/50 ruling should be a guideline only and that vegetation should be assessed by professionals with environmental qualifications and accredited by the RFS. Responsibility should not rest with landowners to self-assess the bushfire threat of vegetation on their property. They do not have the expertise or knowledge of ecological factors and environmental legislation regarding threatened species etc.

Wholesale removal of trees and other vegetation will not necessarily reduce bushfire risk if residents are not well informed about other management and maintenance actions to protect property eg, ember-proofing houses. In the 2019/2020 bushfire season, even grassland burnt fiercely.

The 10/50 Clearing Code of Practice has reduced tree canopy cover in many urban areas although key objective of the Greater Sydney Commission is to halt and reverse this decline. Evidence provided by professional bushfire researchers indicates that reduced vegetation cover may not necessarily reduce the severity of bushfires. More resources should be directed towards expanding research into behaviour of bushfires.

Supporting documents or images
