



---

|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| <b>Title</b>      | Ms       |
| <b>First name</b> | Gabriele |
| <b>Last name</b>  | Curwood  |

---

---

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>I am making this submission as</b> | General public |
| <b>Submission type</b>                | Personal       |

---

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b> |  |
| <b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>  |  |

---

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| <b>Consent to make submission public</b> | Public |
|--|--------|

---

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Your story</b> | <p>While not being directly impacted by the fire front, my community of Gleniffer, Bellingen and surrounds was indirectly affected by months of smoke and fear. The fear began to have an effect on my mental health and others in my community. The smoke affected a lot of people and not only those with pre-existing lung conditions. After weeks of breathing in the smoke my voice became gravelly and I developed a mild cough. I worried about what the smoke would do to my you grandson's developing lungs and wondered if he would be affected for the rest of his life. We couldn't stay in the house for weeks so had to go out. During this time a young woman I know had a miscarriage. Her mother and I both wondered if it was the air pollution caused by the smoke. At the beginning of the fires and smoke the area did not have any air pollution monitoring system and people did not receive the advice to stay indoors.</p> |
|-------------------|---|

---

Listening to the ABC and constantly getting updates on where the fires were and who needed to evacuate was very stressful. I never knew if the next update would affect me and my family. Constantly being notified of a bush fire in your area by the Fires Near Me app also took its toll on my mental health. I live alone and I couldn't share that responsibility with someone.

On one of the days described as having the potential to be catastrophic our local RFS suggested that if our plan was to leave early, we should leave early the next morning. Some left Gleniffer that evening. We left for Bellingen in the morning as we had family there, but I insisted my grandson and his mother stay in Bellingen overnight. That day some businesses and support services were closed, and the town was quiet. The fear was almost palpable as we had fire fronts surrounding us on three sides and they were out of control. Some people were frightened enough that they left Bellingen and headed east to the coast. But as we've seen coastal areas aren't safe either.

---

**1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

Our forestry workers have been reduced in number, their resources reduced and the environmental protection laws are not being enforced. Logging practices are also not being reviewed or reinforced. This has resulted in mismanagement of our forests and the possible resulting impact has been fires in areas that have never burned before.

In short, have these practices made the conditions for bush fires more extreme?

---

**1.2 Preparation and planning**

One can only commend the fire fighters who did more than expected, but the communication between them and the public was not always current or effective. Some people in our area had never heard of developing a bush fire plan or considered what they would do in an emergency situation. When talking to others I was informed that "the fires here are really slow burning and not a problem." The Bellinger Valley is considered a very wet part of NSW and there hasn't been a fire through here since the late 1960s. Many of those that have lived here for generations were quite unperturbed by the threat. Others thought that they would get a knock on the door and be told to evacuate. They were completely unaware of what the real situation could be.

---

**1.3 Response to bushfires**

The response by the volunteer brigades was unprecedented, amazing and laudable. However, they did not have the equipment necessary to keep themselves or others safe. One officer told me had bought fire masks for himself and his son who is also a volunteer. Appropriate fire masks weren't available to them. While the volunteers did everything they could, their resources were stretched. How often we heard that they wouldn't necessarily be able to assist if your house was burning. Some firefighters while protecting other people's homes and lost their own.

---

**1.4 Any other matters**

---

**Upload files**

---