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I am making this submission as	Emergency services
Submission type	Personal
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	deputy captain
Consent to make submission public	Public
Your story	<p>My involvement in the Dunns road fire started on the afternoon of 28-12-2019. 5 of our Lower Bago members and both our trucks attended the Dunns road fire just south of its starting point. We were on private grazing country, as the fire had came out of the private pine, heading south. W spent from about 5.00pm until about 4.00am 29-12-2019 at the fire.</p> <p>It was very apparent that nsw forestry resources were not present in numbers of previous years, and we saw no one from the private plantation. In previous years nsw forestry would have had significant numbers of people, tankers and heavy machinery at a fire wich had any possiblity of getting into their plantation. Most of this equipment was sold and the staff made redundant when the Batlow depot/workshop was shut down.</p> <p>The fire was reasonably well contained the following day by a dozer line and backburning. Due to the rough topography, there wasnt as much blacking out inside the fine as would normally be</p>

done, but those present did the best they could. A bad day with high temps and a wind saw the fire reignite inside the line. It came out, over the line, through the tops of pine trees, which had previously had a slow fire go through the blackberry and weeds underneath the trees! Experienced fire fighters were shocked when they realised what had happened.

The fire made its way southward, reaching my farm about 4.00am new years eve. It had travelled mostly through pine plantation, coming out to burn plantation neighbors out as it went. On the 4-1-2020 the fire again reignited in rough pine plantation country on the north side of westbrook road. This was very different to new years eve. This fire flared at about 1.00pm in 43 degree C temperatures with a wind from the north behind it. Several tankers and men who tried to stop it were literally seconds from being burnt, just barely getting out before the fire got into the full height of the pine trees and ran, unstoppable. It went south like nothing I have seen or heard in 25 years as an rfs member, attending many fires from grazing land to NPWS bushfires. Again, it was stopped when it came out onto private land, burning the rest of my pasture and fences and most of the neighbors pasture, hay and silage right through to Broadleaf Park road about 10km south of here.

This is the main issue this fire has demonstrated. Fire can almost never be actually fought in pine plantation. One can back burn, put in dozer lines and dump retardant (on the odd occasion its available), but actual suppression of the fire is virtually always done only when it exits the plantation, onto private or open country.

In its approach to our place it looked pretty scary, coming through private plantation, it flared as it topped ridges and "open" areas which were choked with blackberry, and it would die down a bit and make its way down a ridge. It got to the creek on the boundary and flared in the blackberry on the plantation side, jumping the creek in seconds. We held the fire here with the help of another brigade (2 trucks) who turned up about 7.00am, and more turned up about mid morning. It was stopped on the west side of taradale/lower bago road and north of westbrook road, and it took all day to hold it on my property, and several more days of blacking out. The same fire made its way on the east side of Taradale road, approaching Tumbarumba, via Willigobung, most of which burned, when, again, the fire came out of the pine with a fury which has to be seen and heard to be believed. It reached my Father and Brothers property at Maragle, about 40km south, about 11.00am that same day, travelling through pine plantation and nature reserve. They fought it, as usual, when it came out of the pine. They managed to save their stock and buildings but lost all their grass, a hay shed and all their fencing is ruined. My farm fared about the same.

The most urgent issue in all this is plantation management. There are no buffer zones or fire breaks worthy of the name, and negligible fire fighting capacity of the plantation owners/managers. They expect the RFS to save them, while their plantations are directly responsible for burning the properties of many rfs members.

The other major issue which became apparent very early is the problems in the rfs itself. Decisions in rfs hq Tumut regarding backburns and commitment of trucks from other brigades to a section of fire, took, in some cases hours, because those in the hq were too numerous, and insist on giving permission for such things.

If the rfs wishes to avoid serious damage to the organisation, these things need to change.

If a Group Captain and Brigade Captain are satisfied to run a backburn, it should have nothing to do with hq, other than inform them of what is happening.

At one point on (I think) new years day, certainly within a day either side, there were 25 fire trucks at Tarcutta, waiting for tasking around Tumbarumba, for several hours. Rfs hq couldnt or

wouldnt make a decision on where to send them, and the district was burning. There is a rather blunt message on the recording of rfs communications to do with that incident.

The issue we have now in this district is that the plantations are being made ready to be replanted, under the same regulation, the same rules, and the same incompetant supervision that contributed to this unprecedented destruction. The blackberry and other weed control is supposed to be enforced by shire councils, and it appears that the snowy valleys council is owned and operated by the pine industry. There is a barely token effort at spraying blackberry along some roads, but nothing actually effective has been done in the district for many years.

The regulation states that pine be not planted closer than seventy meters from a habitable dwelling. That is nothing more than an insult to the neighbors of plantations. There is supposed to be a 6 meter clearing around plantations, again, an insult to neighbors, wich is almost universally ignored by all plantation managers.

There needs to be immediately enacted, a 100meter buffer zone inside all plantations, between the outer drip line of the trees, and the boundary fence, the same exclusion must be enacted and enforced for all public roads, power lines, mobile phone towers and any other infrastructure. There also needs to be the same immediate installation of an enforced buffer zone of two hundred meters between houses and neighbors infrastructure and the outer drip line of plantation trees, and these buffer zones must be completely weed free, and prefferably grazed constantly with livestock. The net effect is that there needs to be an area with minimal fuel load right around all plantations, but wich has grass/pasture to contain at least some of the

sediment/charcoal/crap that comes out of burnt plantation with rain, after a fire. All track in plantations must have a fifty meter setback each side, wich is clear and open, so that lightning strikes can be accessed and small fires extinuished before they get out of control. Proper tracks may act as breaks in slow fires also, giving fire fighters a chance to contain the fire before it gets out of the plantation. The current situation is that no firefighter, nor anyone else with brain function, will go into a plantation during a fire as the tracks are to often blocked or overgrown.

The flow on effect from this fire is not adequately understood by government. The ongoing economic impact will be horrendous. The environmental impact is at least as bad. The Tarcutta Creek was a very healthy little waterway, now it is lifeless, not even carp survived, and there are reports of one-meter native Cod being found dead around Tarcutta downstream from the fireground. Another interesting phenomena has been observed since the fire, and that is that all creeks have significantly more flow, and many dry creeks and springs are running, wich in some cases have not done so for years. The plantations are consuming a vast amount of water every day, every year, and no one seems to have noticed.

Most of what is regrowing in the plantations is blackberry, bathurst burr and other weeds, wich is being completely ignored by the plantation managers and all regulatory bodies. Neighbors of the plantations have been trying to fix/rebuild fences, feed livestock, and deal with the trauma of the fire. The response from the federal Government has been astounding, never would I have expected such speedy and generous help from any government.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1.A hot dry summer. this was always going to be a bad fire season.

2. What amounts, in my opinion, to criminal negligence on the part of pine plantation managers and National Parks and Wildlife NSW, in fuel reduction, track maintenance, weed control and firefighting capability, and the same negligence on the part of all those government bodies who should have been overseeing the preparedness of these groups.

1.2 Preparation and planning

There was none where it mattered.

1.3 Response to bushfires

The response by the federal government has been magnificent. unexpectedly so. the response from state government seems to be to want to blame the whole debacle on climate change in an attempt to remove at least some of the blame from those whom the state government is supposed to regulate with regard to land management, including local councils.

1.4 Any other matters

the first photo is on new years eve. The second in on the 4th jan. The third is I think on the 5th jan, sums up the devastation and exhaustion we all felt.

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