

<b>Title</b>	Mr.
<b>First name</b>	Glen
<b>Last name</b>	Olsen
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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Resident
<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>On or around the 4th October 2019, there was a large fire burning just over the western fence line of my property on and up a large mountain on Mistake State Forest, this same fire being started by lighting. The fire had been burning for about three weeks and was not under control. This fire was being air bombed by two Helicopter's for a period of two weeks but was not under control as events of the 8 th November proved in fact.</p> <p>On or about the 29 nd of October I was on my property [REDACTED]. I noted that there were many people down on the flat area beside the Creek. There were a number of vehicles including a large John Dear bulldozer. I went down to them to identify why they had entered my property.</p> <p>A man who identified himself to me as a senior Rural Bush Fire</p>

(R.F.S) official [REDACTED], the decision maker. I asked if he was to put a fire break between my property and the fire. He indicated he would not allow a 'back burn' to encapsulate the fire. I was very alarmed by this failure to address the danger. I stated that, if he did not do a back burn then he would (by default) burn us out if we got a westerly wind. He stated that, if I felt that way about the matter I should leave. I stated that, he could not make me leave and I would not be leaving. I would be staying to protect my property. As one can see, I did disagree with this person. He moved off some distance from me.

I then had a conversation with the decision maker from the State Forest Corporation (SFC) he outlined to me that, he was there to do back burning operations in the same way I had just described to the RFS decision maker. I stated that, he was welcome to back burn on my property to appropriately deal with the danger as the breeze was slight and from the east to the west, and was forecast to be that way for the foreseeable future. He also explained the RFS had the power and not himself. I believe that, the SFC could clearly see the danger but was overruled. They then thereafter, removed the bulldozer and other equipment. Nothing was done that could have produced a controlled outcome but Helicopters continued water bombing, this did not do anything to control this fire as the facts clearly show. Helicopters etc. are great TV optics but do not work at all in this type of fire situation, where as controlled back burns do.

The aforementioned fire continued to burn in the forest just beyond my western boundary out of control, and being water bombed by helicopters until the 8 th of November 2019 at around 12 noon, when there was a sudden strong (20knots or more) wind change from the west to the east. The effect on the aforesaid fire was immediate and catastrophic. It was as if a bomb, a time bomb had gone off, the whole valley was in flames in a time frame of 60 minutes. This fire burned all the way down both McHugh's Creek Road and South Arm Road, to the left and to the right. It burned up and over Whip mountain, all the way down Boat Harbour Road and all the lands between, including Williams Hill Road and Welsh Creek Road. Many Houses and farm sheds and hundreds of Kilometres of fences were damaged or destroyed. A great number of the areas wild life are dead, and the few that did survive, their habitat is destroyed for years to come.

This was not an unforeseeable catastrophe, as many of the Farmers/landholders of this area had been upset and complaining about the fact that, the RFS in this area had for a number of years closed the normal fire back burning/ fuel reduction burn off season down just as the conditions on our farms became proper and right to do these normal farm burn offs. The normal time the fire season/fuel reduction burn off was stopped, was on the first of September every year but over the last years it was stopped in the first week of August. The conditions congenial to "burning off" are to be found best, in August as the ground is dry enough (but not too dry) to have a fuel reduction fire burn, without the fire going out all the time, and only doing a poor or partial fuel reduction. Each farmer/landholder knows the time his or her property is ready for this most important and normal farm job. The RFS was started in 1997 when the N.S.W State government took control over what

was then, The association of farmers and landholders, who would make decisions about when and how to burn off and also they would fight wild fires if they happened. In the past /pre RFS..1997, fires in the winter months in the Hills and Mountain in these areas where aloud/permitted to burn for weeks even months. Slowly and surely reducing the forest fuel build up. Now this same winter month "natural fires" are put out by the RFS. These same fires are easy the extinguish. Thereafter the under forest fuel build up has now had no natural remedy. If this practise is continued it is clear that this may/will happen again. Proper fire management of the environment is paramount to avoid wild fires. It is important to acknowledge the natural reality that there are 173 species of the genus Banksia family of trees/plants many of which need a low intensity fire to be able to gemmate and profligate these same plants are now under threat in our areas of the lack of fire and the now wild fires that have destroyed large areas of the forest. One other point is that, the practices of the National Parks and Wildlife Serves to do with natural fires and fire management needs to be amended as they have in the past been unable to see the facts and the changers that need to be implemented if these wild fire situations are not to become more problematic. My conclusion would be along the line that, a committee type Area Fuel reduction management decision making processes should take over, from the now National Parks and Wildlife Serves/ RFS 'only process.' Council and local farmers needs should be franchised and part of the process of fire control on their properties and surrounding areas. Also, The State Forest Corporation, should be able to make quality and timely back burning operational decisions without being "hand cuffed" by the National Parks and Wildlife Serves/ RFS policy makers, we do not have any recourse when they are wrong. People who have lived in these valleys all their lives are saying "never was wild fires like this". But there have been droughts and high temp. many times before. This catastrophe in this area has never happened in the previous 90 or so years will it be repeated?

### **1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

My story outlines the failure of upper management of the RFS to identify and allow landholders and other authorities directly affected by fire risk, to put in place the proper and "time proven" management strategies of "off season burn off" of High build up of under Forest fuel loads. Furthermore my story points out in fact, when there was/is a timely and appropriate opportunity to put a "fire brake" in RFS blocked this. At this point in time there has been no explanation given as to why RFS did this?

### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

For over one hundred years before this major fire event 8th November 2019 the property owners and Authorities conducted fuel reduction burns of area of Forest that needed it. Then in 1994 the RFS was given sole priority over who and if, we, the effected people were permitted to burn high fuel loads when we deemed if fit. This has now changed and now we are seeing what will be followed by more and more danger from fires unless we are franchised again in respects to fire control in and around our properties. We can not under take planning as we are dis in franchised under the current system

### **1.3 Response to bushfires**

I talk with a man that farmed in these valleys for some 80 years .He has never seen in his life time the high under forest build up of fuel ,as a direct result of anti off season fire burn off policies by RFS management policies. There is no process in which we the

people effected can complain or have input into RFS decisions  
My account of fact points out that Helicopters etc. bombing fires  
do not put major fires out .They are great at some things but the  
media is putting forward a narrative about these methods of fire  
control that is short sighted in that back burns of areas about to  
be fire effected are by far the most effective fire management  
technique.

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**1.4 Any other matters**

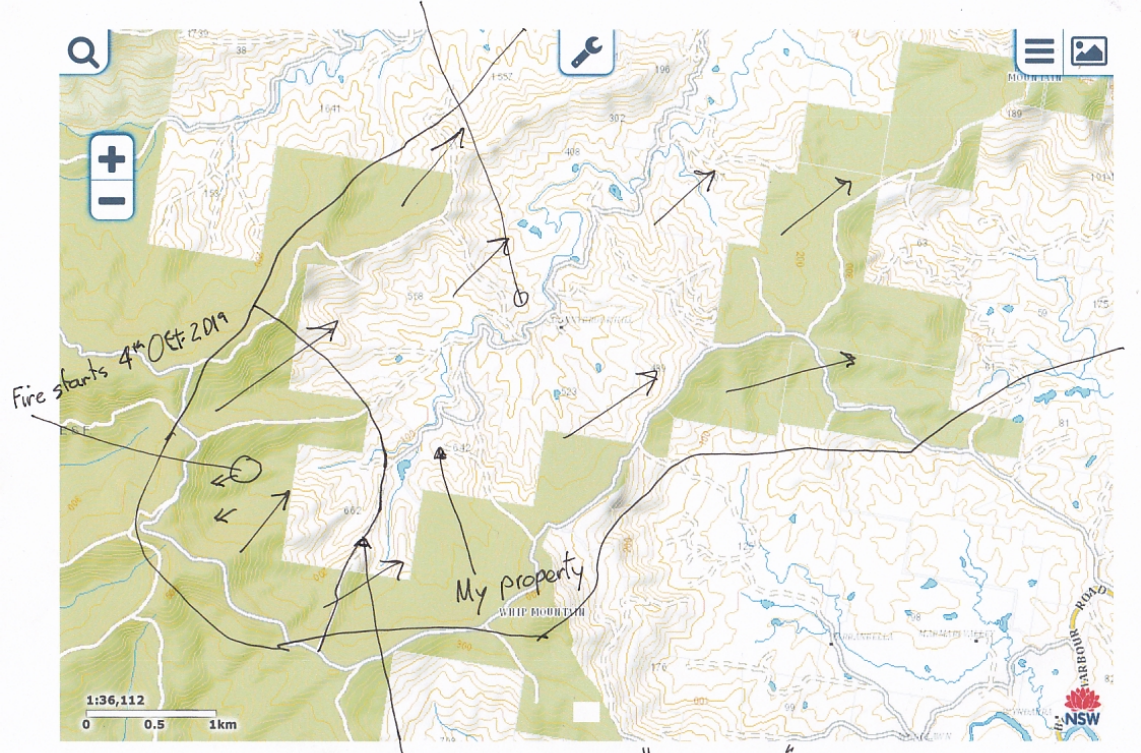
NATURAL FIRES .. In the past /pre RFS..1997, "lighting strike  
fires" in the winter months in the Hills and Mountains in these  
areas where  
aloud/permited to burn for weeks even months. Slowly and  
surely reducing the forest fuel build up.Germinating plants as it  
went.  
Now this same winter month "natural fires" are put out by the  
RFS. (helicopters) These same fires are easy to  
extinguish. Thereafter the under forest fuel build up has, now had  
no natural remedy. If this practice of not allowing "natural fires"  
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extent of fire on the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov.7<sup>th</sup> Mt. L. Progress "back burn" blocked



