



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Greg

Last name

Mitchell

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A resident in a bushfire-affected area

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

20th we went to property with the understanding that I have over 20 years firefighting experience as a volunteer, Discussing with my wife we made this decision with the principle reason to save what infrastructure and livestock we could.

We went with the understanding that due to the geographical location we could be surrounded by fire and may not be able to obtain any assistance from services.

At this time the Currowang for and Tianjara fires could both potentially impact on my property.

21st the fires merged into a firestorm and as a result the direction was heading towards Sassafrass and Nerriga, towards us and meant that we were now isolated and any assistance was now unable to get through.

At this time there was a 7 day period where the weather patterns had settled down a little and there was potential to limit the impact of the fires. 2 RFS members on bikes arrived for an assessment of the situation across the whole area/plateau. They

were mean to go to Sassafrass but continued toward us. The main access road was completely blocked by several large trees which had fallen across the road, this meant there was no ability for any assistance to get through this way. I was in contact with Fire Control and National Parks and Wildlife and was assisting in plotting of the fire locations, my wife and myself noted that the Fire Near Me application that we were being urged to use as the most up to date data was nowhere near correct and did not display a true picture of the situation. 28th When the fire was approaching my property around 10.30pm I called fire control with no answer, this is a number that was to be manned 24 hours a day, unable to get any response I called 000 to advise 2 souls where there just in case and was shocked that they could not locate my address in any of the databases. It took them 10 to 15 minutes to locate us on a map point. This is of great concern to me for any future instances where any emergency assistance may be required, I have now placed my Longitude and Latitude coordinates close to my phone for this reason. I continued to call RFS (as a continuation of the 000 call) as fires approaching from East and North showing imminent impact and I now received a call from Fire Control Sydney and we discussed strategies, I was then advised we would receive a welfare call first thing in morning at daybreak to check out status. This call came in at 4pm the next day. 29th neighbours came to check in with us after fighting through fire as there was now a southerly impact now threatening. Our contact through National Parks was overwhelmed and only able to send us emails with out of date information of the status. There was no consistency of contact with anyone and system fell apart. I have heard at this time that the RFS decided to sacrifice Sassafrass to protect coastlines on east – lower overall impact. 30th fire impacted on our eastern side but mostly channelling around through tree lines as this was easiest path for it to travel, we are located on a plateau and in a clearing fully surrounded by thick bushland this meant we were now surrounded by fire activity. No road assets could be offered, or air asset assistance arrived, however a solitary Fire officer arrived at property with no PPE, no equipment through the fire line and dangerous conditions. He was stranded on our property while we were being overrun by the fires. The wind changed and this resulted in the fire coming back from north and we were overrun at this time. We saved our house and livestock but lost all our horticulture and equipment. For the next week or so we worked on fire control – spot fires, cut way through fire to support neighbors unable to get to road 92, which is the main access due to active fires and tree fall, we were trapped unable to get out for at least another week. We acknowledge that we went with full understanding and knowledge of risk associated but with the degree of training and knowledge I have as a volunteer firefighter we determined the risk was appropriate.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

There is something to be said regarding the hazard reduction strategies and the maintenance of fire trails in place. This could be reviewed , National Parks are closing fire trails and this means fire control is extremely difficult due to the limitations this causes. There appears to be an over reliance on air assets

1.2 Preparation and planning

No equipment in remote areas, there could consideration for the supply of community firefighting assets based on site. Better mapping and address recognition, rural properties often do not have street addresses on public databases resulting in delays from emergency response. Due to this we did not even receive any public alerts such as text messaging. My areas never mentioned as locales in fire near me application or information.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Due to the location of my property we received greater access from Nerriga community members and Nerriga fire captain called to offer support for road clearing
No assistance from Shoalhaven area, cooperative agreements within the neighboring LGA's for those on fringes of the designated shire zones

1.4 Any other matters

Fires Near Me application - really requires a total review, data not up to date, specific areas/zones not mentioned, therefore no alerts being sent. No disclosure on site and this is the recommended site for the most up to date information and the one to follow as stated by NSW govt.
As a volunteer after the events I attempted to give feedback to my area supervisor about my experiences and what I have learnt from these but this has not been followed up, I find this disappointing as a member of the RFS.

Supporting documents or images
