



Your details

Ms

Title

First name

Jane

Last name

Frankum

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

Firstly thank you for giving us all the opportunity to tell you our stories and offering our ideas. Having lived all my life on the property that was effected I feel I have useful information to contribute. For the second time in 19 years we were threatened by extreme fires. This time much worse and our property was affected. For weeks we were on high alert not being able to leave our property for fear of it returning as it continued to burn on a number of different fronts. This effected our businesses our every day lives and our mental state and still does. Everyone in this area knew unless we had rain we were going to have fires again. There had been no maintenance of the Sydney Water Board catchment country to our west for those 19 years and it was bone dry and loaded with fuel. It was a disaster waiting to happen. When the fire burnt to the western edge of Warragamba dam we felt a slight sense of relief. But then we heard it was across the dam and heading straight towards us. There had not been much wind so this was unexpected. Within

24 hours we were under threat. The fires taking the same route it had taken in 2001. Thursday 5th December the fire raged towards us. I was able to get some of my horses out but had to leave 3 in the barest paddocks. We evacuated that night returning late to sit up all night watching and waiting to defend our property. The next day again no wind but the fires were unable to be contained and we evacuated again this time before any authorities notified us. The fire jumped Silverdale Road and burnt through a corridor of bush of two of our neighbours and came across our paddocks. We returned via another road to access our property to put out the fire coming across our property, thankfully helped by neighbours. A number of city fire trucks and firefighters would not come onto the property and watched us all putting out the bushfires. They said they were not to go off road as their vehicles were not 4 wheel drive. By then it was a grass fire that we all put out with finally some help from a helicopter. However this grass fire, had we not put this fire out was heading towards more bushland with a number of houses with no way out. The local brigades kept a close watch on us and came and checked on the smouldering trees for weeks which was great.

Until it rained we were continually on alert as there was still the fire to the north or us at Roberts Road that burnt for weeks. Even now while typing this my heart is racing. It is the most terrifying experience we have had. The worse thing about it all is that we live in fear of it happening again. Each summer is now a worrying time.

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

1. The lack of maintenance in Water Board and State Forest areas. They must be kept cleared and the build up of dry fuel has to be kept to a minimum at all times.
It is cheaper to spend money on prevention than have to spend billions on such destruction.
2. Clearly the weather was a contributing factor and we have no control of this but we know this is something that will happen again if we don't act now.
3. Burning off must be done little and often and kept under good control.
4. Too many houses being allowed to be built in known fire areas.
5. Vacant acres that have not been maintained for many years.
6. Lack of public awareness of how serious the conditions were and understanding of how easily fires start.

1.2 Preparation and planning

1. Very large fire breaks between forest areas and private properties must be cleared now. This will enable fire fighters somewhere to access and provide a safer area for them. It will also provide a break to slow the fire. This needs to be minimum of 1km not a 100m off the roads.
2. Not allow more development of houses and small acreage to build in the fire affected areas. Unless there is a huge increase in fire fighters and fire fighting vehicles they can not be expected to defend more properties/houses and buildings. Local Councils

need to be more responsible for keeping people in safe environments.

3. Regular small burnoffs in these large bush areas. Starting from the properties on the edge of the Catchment areas and State Forests and burning back away from them, not the other way around. To be conducted by qualified people.

4. More money has to be directed to Bushfire Prevention.

5. All properties with acreage need to be encouraged to build dams. They were essential for the helicopters to be able to quickly and easily access water.

1.3 Response to bushfires

1. Clearly we need more manpower and so more money needs to be spent on this. It is not fair on volunteers to have to do to the extent of what they did during these fires.

2. We need more fire fighting vehicles. All on ground vehicles need to be off road four wheel drive vehicles. This would even be useful in the cities. More fire fighting helicopters and planes.

3. We need to have continual burn offs. Small and often.

4. Only highly experienced people to do back burning. I am concerned some of the back burning during the fires may have made the problem worse. I am not blaming anyone for trying anything but this is something that probably needs to be assessed.

1.4 Any other matters

1. All fire trucks should be off road four wheel drive vehicles.

2. Properties with acreage must be encouraged to build dams as this was a very significant factor to access water that is essential for the helicopters trying to defend properties. Maybe councils could think about some way of rewarding people who have big dams. Lower rates. If it wasn't for ours and our neighbours dams many more homes would have been lost not to mention our own homes.

3. Not allowing councils to approve small acreage subdivisions and housing bordering National Parks and Water Catchment areas. Significant clearing of bush area would need to be done to make it safe.

4. It is crucial we take advice from the knowledgeable indigenous people who maintained these lands for thousands of years. Also we should be employing them to do our controlled hazard reduction burns during the winter and training others in their very successful ways.

Supporting documents or images
