



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Jeff

Last name

Freeman

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

Since 2002 I have owned a 5 acre block of cleared land with a house and 3 outbuildings adjacent to a large, derelict private pine forest that is contiguous with Morton National Park. On the other side, I have a Public school and their 1 hectare unmanaged forest area. This was the most difficult 6 weeks I have ever experienced with the constant and sometimes extreme threat of fire combined with my lack of physical, emotional and our property preparedness for this. The physical threat was only resolved by the arrival of over 500mm of rain but the emotional toll is not resolving nearly as quickly.

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

We have been warned of the effects of climate change for a number of decades and I have every reason to believe the extended dry period is more than likely to be a result of this. On 4 January a pyro-cumulonimbus cloud formed to the NE as a result of the Currowang Fire and when a southerly hit that night, it dumped fire and high winds on Bundanoon and Winbgello. This kind of event had never been seen by the most seasoned firefighters and residents.

1.2 Preparation and planning

The extended winter dry period and seemed to offer little opportunity for backburning and Penrose, I understand, has never had a fire attack from the south - it has always been from the N/NW under extreme wind and dry-heat conditions. Rushed preparations were made as the Currowang fire grew and urgent clearing and grading of land was undertaken by the RFS and contractors. Some local community meeting were arranged at the last minute but these were sometimes impossible to attend because the crowds far exceeded hall capacity.

1.3 Response to bushfires

The back burning that was undertaken in late January around the south of our towns was high risk and this resulted in an extremely hot fire at night on 26 Jan with resulting massive ember attack on my neighbour's property and the parts of the town. I remain ever thankful that the air and land containment efforts by the RFS and dedicated locals was exemplary but hampered by all the problems of equipment, poor water supply and communications problems that you will now doubt hear about. Mapping on 'fires near me' was problematic on many occasions. Friends from near and far saw our property as being obliterated for some 3 days after 4 January, before the map was able to be corrected. This caused extreme alarm and I spent many hours reassuring all who feared for us and our property that we were OK.

1.4 Any other matters

The maps available to the RFS showing flame front and likely zone of next attack would have been extremely useful but when I could obtain these they were scanned and of very poor resolution. Ready availability of much higher resolution phone maps would have eased my stress enormously. Maps just showing burned areas are in the end of little use. I was also extremely disappointed in almost all aspects of our Council's involvement. They are terrible communicators and so risk-averse that vital community facilities were unavailable when we needed them most. Their management of the 1 million post fire grant seemed pathetic. A couple of pictures taken from my place of the cloud build on 4 Jan and out of control backburn on 26 Jan are attached.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- IMG_9090.jpeg
 - IMG_9362.jpeg
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