



Your details

Miss

Title

First name

Jennifer

Last name

Turnbull

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

I live on the border of Hawkesbury and The Hills Councils. We were lucky on The Hills side that the bushfire did not jump the river at Wiseman's Ferry, all due to the expert efforts of the volunteers and paid workers of RFS and Councils concerned. I have many family and close community members who worked tirelessly 24 hours a day so that we were safe.

My issue concerns the use of mechanics for the vehicles in both councils. My understanding is that Hawkesbury do not have on-call mechanics over a weekend and rely on tow trucks to remove broken down vehicles. One Hawkesbury vehicle did break down in dense bush in St Alban's (near Wiseman's Ferry) on a Friday night into which a tow truck could not gain access. That is the first of my concern that no-one from Hawkesbury was available to fix the truck. I do not know why such a policy of not having a mechanic ready is used during an emergency situation.

There were mechanics on-call in The Hills. Two men were contacted by Fire Control to go to this remote area, without phone reception at 11pm that Friday. Not knowing the situation fully, two of them went for safety reasons, and in case they had to tow the truck out, so one man would be in each truck. After some time they were able to get the truck running again and to get it out of danger of the oncoming bushfire. I personally was anxious as one of those men was my brother and he did not get home until 2am on the Saturday. I was glad when I saw him come home.

I know that both of these men kept the RFS vehicles in The Hills district on the road every day in the lead up to, and the following weeks, of that severe fire season.

I know that they were praised by the Hawkesbury crew for repairing their vehicle so quickly, so that could be back to the fire, as every hand was needed on deck that bad weekend.

There were many call-outs for those two mechanics during that Gosper's Mountain fire. When they were called by Comms they both responded as needed, sometimes to as far away as Lithgow. Disappointingly, they have not been paid for those call-outs times over weekends, as apparently the call-outs hadn't been approved by The Hills Council, even though the mechanics were paged by RFS Comms. It seems to me that The Hills is changing how they organise their finances in regards to the RFS and their specialist mechanics. One would think that following such a dreadful fire season that councils would be thinking about adding to their resources not taking away.

The trucks cost upwards of \$250K and if they breakdown on a Friday and just left on the side of the road until Monday morning until a tow truck or a mechanic can be paid normal rates of pay, does seem to be a misdirected use of funds.

As I said, we were lucky in The Hills this fire season but if the trucks are not as well and quickly maintained prior and during a fire season due to restrictions on workers wages and equipment then I am concerned for future bushfire seasons.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

Supporting documents or images
