



Your details

Mrs

Title

First name

Jillian

Last name

Salz

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

See attachment.

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

-Climate change is real and is the main cause of the worsening fires. We have witnessed the 'drying' of the Blue Mts. area in the last 20 years or so. All govts. have to seriously address this issue.
-Why wasn't the Ruined Castle fire extinguished early, before it

threatened Katoomba houses, Scenic World, etc.? Were there insufficient resources, ie. water-bombing planes and helicopters, to spread around to all areas with fires.
-Lightning caused Ruined Castle fire, a neighbour saw it start and 'called it in'. WE are puzzled and bemused that it wasn't dealt with earlier.

1.2 Preparation and planning

-We were as prepared as we could be for our own property, our fire plan in action, and we had useful knowledge about fires because of our CFU training.
-We kept in touch with neighbours, kept track of who was around, who would evacuate, etc.
-We need more and safer trucks for RFS in areas of high risk. Some better quality trucks from our RFS units had been used up north and were still up there. So the BMRFS units had to 'make do' with less suitable trucks when fires escalated in BM.
-We need more specialist planes, helicopters, etc. IN AUSTRALIA so that they can be rapidly deployed.

1.3 Response to bushfires

-There were a number of fire units patrolling our area, just 'on the lookout', which was reassuring.
- One fire(deliberately lit I think) Tues. afternoon before Christmas, was very quickly extinguished due to the diligence of our firefighters and the community
-The commercial media is too sensational and doesn't give just factual information. This creates fear and uncertainty which is dangerous. ABC regular radio reports were magnificent. Accurate info is critical.

1.4 Any other matters

- It is a very good idea to close National Parks on high-risk fire days, BUT the National Parks doesn't have resources to close all entrances. We witnessed tour buses stopping in our street and allowing tourist to enter the Nat. Park, disregarding 'closed' signs and tape across paths.
THIS IS CRAZY. TOUR BUSES SHOULD BE BANNED from BM in times of fires and high fire risk.
- Smoke pollution/air quality is a big associated issue and health risks have to be addressed. People need to know the air quality rating in their immediate area and when to stay indoors. I support the Koala project's continuation.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Bushfire Inquiry.doc
-

I retired in 2006 and my husband and I moved to Leura to live, although I had spent much time in the Blue Mountains for forty years prior to the move here. Our house has been in the family since the early 1950's. The house overlooks the Jameson Valley towards Mt Solitary, with a sweeping view from Kings Tableland in the east to the Three Sisters and the Narrowneck Ridge in the west.

The house has been threatened by bushfires 3 times, once in the severe 1957 fires, again in 2011 and then once more in the recent catastrophic 2019/2020 fires.

We were only too aware of the dangerous fire season we faced due to the extremely dry conditions. We have 2 Community Fire Units (auspiced by NSW Fire and Rescue) in our street, and we have learnt much about fire behaviour in the 10 years we have been training as CFU members.

We were expecting family to join us for a few weeks over Christmas, our daughter who lives in Melbourne,, her husband and their 3 children, 10, 6 and 4yrs. Our son and his family were to spend Christmas and New Year holidays at Lake Conjola. Little did we know what we would be in for!

Fires in NSW started early in the season and were very bad in the north. Although the fire closest to us at Ruined Castle began before Christmas, it did not seem to be serious enough to threaten us, and we made the family decision that it was safe for our family to drive up from Melb. on Friday, 19th December. Of course we were all watching the fire apps. closely. They were still surprised by the amount of smoke almost all the way north from Melb. The fires in SW. Sydney were escalating, but our family were fortunate to make it through to Leura. The following day the Hume Hwy was closed due to the fires.

Conditions deteriorated from then, with fires spreading and joining to create mega-fires.

Within days I felt we were on a precarious 'island' surrounded by fire and at the mercy of the wind direction.

The smoke became worse and worse, so we had to remain indoors much of the time. I felt increasingly anxious at the worsening fires, the unpredictability of the situation, and the seemingly over-stretched resources to deal with it.

By night we could see the immense flames in the south from the Wattle Creek fire and the fire further west near Jenolan. One night in the New Year, our son-in-law came in from a walk in our backyard and asked us to come and have a look down the back. To our astonishment there were huge flames along Kings Tableland, not far to our south-east. There was nothing showing up on our fire app. which was worrying. We rang BM Fire headquarters which had no information about this fire. We prepared for a quick evacuation if needed and hoped for the best. Our 6 year old granddaughter has 'high-end' special needs, she cannot walk, so we had to think of her safety.

On New Year's day our son rang to say that there was a dangerous fire at Lake Conjola. They were unable to evacuate because the one road out was impassable due to trees having fallen across it. He said that he wouldn't send photos because it looked too frightening. By that evening they lost power and mobile phone reception (tower down), so we had no contact for two days. Very worrying.

Well, we all got through it. I am, however, in dread of the future and in fear of the probability of more horrific bushfire events to come.