

Your details

Title

Mrs

First name

Joanne

Last name

Ashe

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

On Friday night 8th November our home and 10 acre property at [REDACTED] Tinonee NSW 2430 was totally burned down in the Hillville fire. We received RFS messages the afternoon before warning us of the fire in our area. We prepared our house and ourselves as the best we could and to the best of our knowledge. We couldn't see any smoke on Friday and no warnings came on the phone on Friday 8th November until 10.17pm but by then it was too late as the strong southerly had arrived and blew the fire directly onto the path of our place. We had no warning that the fire was so close to us and that it was going to head straight for us. When we moved into our place 32 years ago there was a dairy next door with cleared paddocks and the Kiawarak Forest behind the dairy about a kilometer away from our place. We saw the glow of red on the southern ridge closest to our house and that was the first warning we had that the fire was heading towards us around 9.30pm. Our plan was to stay and protect our property

as we had prepared our home and had a fire fighting pump but by 10pm we realised that the fire was too big and ferocious and the whole plantation was alight and the ember attack was massive so we escaped for our lives. About 18 or so years ago Mid Coast Water bought the dairy property next door and leased it to NSW Forestry to plant a hardwood plantation which they did and it was very successful but they didn't maintain it at all in this time. We contacted them when they first started planting it as we were concerned about our bush fire risk being increase as the plantation came right up to our boundary fence and not far from our house. They assured us that we would be ok as they would thin out the plantation by one third after six years then another third at twelve years and it would be grazed by cattle or slashed to keep the undergrowth down and that if there was a fire that Forestry had it's own fire fighting outfit and that we would be even safer than if the RFS was fighting the fire. None of this maintenance was ever carried out in this plantation! We didn't phone the fire brigade as we left home so quickly fearing for our lives and the messages said not to phone them but a neighbor did phone around 10pm and they didn't arrive till 2hrs later and it was reported that by then our house had been destroyed. We haven't ever been contacted by the RFS, Mid Coast Water, NSW Forestry or any other official agency since our house was burnt down for an apology or to see how we are going.

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

Severe drought and build up of bush undergrowth and unmaintained plantation on the property next door.

1.2 Preparation and planning

We prepared our property to the best of our knowledge by clearing everything from around the house. Lawn was mowed although there wasn't much due to drought and kept paddocks slashed. We had a firefighting pump connected to our pool and 2 hoses ready. we moved gas bottles into the paddock well away from the house. We planned to stay to protect our property unless we felt our lives were threatened and we had our work place in Taree to evacuate to.

1.3 Response to bushfires

We didn't have anywhere enough prior warning that the fire was heading in our direction and we had no help from the fire brigade or any contact since the fire. We have tried contacting Mid Coast Water and so far communication has been limited on their part.

1.4 Any other matters

Now that there has been rain and everything is starting to grow back and our house has been demolished and cleared we could start thinking about rebuilding by unless the plantation is dealt with the risk of a severe bush fire remains and the same thing happening again. We never want to experience anything like what we did ever again!

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Resized_20191109_081813_0.jpeg
- Resized_20191109_081925001_0.jpeg
- Resized_IMAG0202003_0.jpeg

