



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

John

Last name

Blay

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

In 1982 with the assistance of the Parks Writers Award I started a long walk through the Deua and Wadbilliga, collecting all the time personal stories and the history of the region. Fire was the main subject of people's stories. With much research my project has continued over the years and seen publication of numerous books where fire history is an essential part of the story. The books include: Back Country Trek through the Deua and Wadbilliga (Methuen/Canopy Press), On Track: searching out the Bundian Way (University of NSW Press/NewSouth), and Wild Nature: walking Australia's south east forests (University of NSW Press/NewSouth). I have walked the entire south east region as a field naturalist and know the forests and their history very well and written about its fire history in books, journals and newspapers and felt the full force of fire in Eden during Jan 2020. As chair of BVSC's Parks and Foreshores Committee in Bermagui for some twenty years I oversaw a successful series of low-intensity burns that protected the region from fire danger.

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

The causes and contributing factors were essentially ongoing extreme drought and climate change. The forests and their drainage lines dried out to an extent I have not before seen, so that instead of inhibiting fire, the wet sclerophyll places dessicated to the extent they became wicks that quickly conducted fire through the forests and mountainous terrain. Fires raced across the clear-fell forestry coupes of whatever age quicker than through natural forests.

1.2 Preparation and planning

All personnel from the highest to the lowest in the RFA should have known the legal requirements for work in the various areas of the forests. Nobody should be given carte blanche to clear wherever they wish. Even private land-holders do not have a right to privately start back-burns in the hope of protecting their own property and adding to the endangerment of many other properties and lives.

1.3 Response to bushfires

In some places the response to the fires has been extreme. I cite what I see as unwarranted and or unsanctioned clearing along Coolangubra Forest Way in the South East Forests National Park that has been damaging in the extreme of protected area values and the natural beauty national parks are supposed to protect. Perhaps the clearing was sanctioned? But I believe all bulldozing/fire break works in the forests should comply with the legal requirements. Nobody, including private landholders or contractors have a right to clear land at whim. Particularly offensive was the clearing of some 12 kilometres through the national park along the heritage protected route of Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council's Bundian Way.

1.4 Any other matters

Listen to what the scientists say. Fire hazard reduction and so called back-burning are not a panacea against fire. There is always the danger of encouraging scrub and the more fire-prone species that only add to the threat of fires. The skilled use of low intensity, mosaic burning would be the best weapon against the spread of fire.

Current post-fire salvage operations along the roadsides by Forestry are likely to increase the danger of fire.

The south east and Monaro region is still extremely dry, and vulnerable to further extreme fires in coming years. Any further fires in the next few years will endanger countless species and the possibility of recovery for the forests. Perhaps the best mitigation of the threat of fire would come with actions to lessen the threats of a changing climate and days so hot and dry no action will stop the progress of a rampaging fire

Supporting documents or images
