

Your details

Title

Mr

First name

Ken

Last name

Ainsworth

Submission details

I am making this submission as

Emergency services personnel

Submission type

I am making a personal submission

Your position in the organisation (if applicable)

Group leader

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 am a member of the Rural Fire Service and have been for over 35 years. My last office held was Group Captain of Taralga Brigade and I retired after seven years from this position to a less active roll five years ago. As the Green Wattle Creek fire approached the Wombeyan Caves area I was called upon to assist in the planning and construction of fire breaks to protect Taralga and stop the fire spread to the south where it would impact Tarlo National Park. The terrain is very rugged in this area and difficult to access. The reason I was called in was purely to provide local knowledge and experience from previous fires that I have dealt with in this area. The incident controllers and the local brigade Captain were totally lacking the essential intrinsic knowledge of the area. I saw this as a very serious

failure of the local people involved and those out of area persons who were in control of the operation. Lack of local knowledge regarding access and escape is deadly in these areas and places the crews in situations of unacceptable risk.

Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.2 Preparation and planning

During my engagement I supervised the construction of several fire trails through very rugged country which in my opinion should now be classified as strategic trails. The fire trail from Queens Gap, near Wombeyan Caves right through to Long Gully Trail and east to Hanworth Station and the Wollondilly River are of significant strategic benefit in the event of a future incident. They need to be maintained in good order as the cost of construction would have been significant and to let them deteriorate would be pure vandalism.

1.3 Response to bushfires

It concerned me greatly that planning was sending trucks and crews when the crew were totally unfamiliar with the type of terrain they were expected to operate in. Crews from North Sydney areas were arriving in Taralga and were limited in their capability to operate in this environment. In a number of instances the trucks were sent back after traveling a great distance as no local crew was available to put with them to guide them.

1.4 Any other matters

Far too little importance is being placed on retaining local knowledge by the current brigade senior officers in regard to safe access and egress from rugged areas such as the area east and north of Taralga. Retention of this knowledge is ultimately critical for timely response to incidents and maintaining crew safety.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Hanworth Trail in the centre of photo in distance.jpg
- Long Gully Fire Trail Extension to Mares Forrest Road.jpg
- Long Gully trail extension in distance centre of photo.jpg





