



<b>Title</b>	MS
<b>First name</b>	LAURAE
<b>Last name</b>	HARVEY
<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Resident
<b>Submission type</b>	Personal
<b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	Public
<b>Your story</b>	<p>I run a kangaroo sanctuary in Runnyford, in the Mogo State Forest. On NYE, my home and sanctuary were destroyed. All outbuildings were destroyed or damaged, but luckily, a surviving cabin is still liveable and all the kangaroo feed survived in the shipping container situated in the machinery shed. I am still living here now.</p> <p>Two fires went through Runnyford that night. The first one went behind Runnyford Road and into Mogo. I was woken at 4am by my neighbour and RFS volunteer Simon banging on my door, for that one. Myself and Karen (volunteer from Seattle) spent two hours trying to water down the house and grass, but the fire hose had no pressure. All the kangaroos who normally hang around the house, were gone. Only 3 were still there and I tried to bring them in under the verandah, but the wind was too terrifying for them and they took off.</p>

After 2 evacuation warnings in the lead up to NYE, the second being when the SES visited two weeks prior, and after noting that every prediction chart made by the RFS thus far had been very accurate, I guess I didn't expect the fire to come through that night. In fact, I was only anticipating possible ember attack on the property later that day. I guess none of us really anticipated NYE would be what it became.

After two hours, it went quiet and we thought we had escaped. We took some much needed reprieve, believing that the fire had moved on.

Myself and 3 neighbours share a peninsula on the banks of the Clyde River and are located down a separate forestry road. The entry to my place is 1.6km north of Runnyford Road.

Simon and I had previously discussed that if it became too much, we should head down to the river and he will come get us. Just 20mins after the first fire was over, it was on again. It was too much. The fire was already through Simon's place behind us and was currently engulfing my other neighbour James.

Karen and I argued. I wanted to stay in the house, which was made from brick and a fair distance from the trees. "The Fires Near Me App says to seek shelter in a solid structure" I said. The SES had previously told me we'd prepared well for the fire, I fully expected the house to survive. If the fire hose was working properly, I may have stayed to defend. I can only assume, given the fire came from the south (and the only drive-able access out of here), that the fire was already destroying the pumps and/or water tanks at the southern end of the property.

I wanted to stay at the house - to be there for when the kangaroos came back, but given the inability to defend, Karen won and we headed to the river with the cat.

At some point Simon had mentioned the fire had taken his boat, so we didn't expect him to collect us, but sure enough, our knight in shining yellow, turned up on his fishing boat and we headed out to the 'safety' of Batemans Bay.

It took forever to get there, the winds thrashing the open boat around, and we first took shelter in North Batemans Bay at an oyster farm jetty. It was the first time we could breathe fresh air. Luckily, Karen and I had P2 masks on and a spare in my bag which I gave to Simon. We took nothing of value with us - there was no time. After a while we had to flee again, as the fire approached on the northern side of the Clyde River where we were sheltering. Whilst on the river, we watched the fire go into Batemans Bay Industrial Centre. We no longer knew where it would be safe to go.

We finally got to Catalina where the emergency centre was, but it was packed and there was no room. More frightening, was the plane flying overhead spraying fire retardant - we didn't know if the fire was about to hit the evacuation centre or not!

We ended up sitting in the middle of the Bay, waiting for the smoke to clear enough to find somewhere to go, which ended up being the shopping centre where Woolworths was - 5 hours after we'd fled and I saw my property on fire from the river. A super nice guy from Coles was there, handing out donated food and water. Woolworths had shut its doors, but he made sure Coles donated supplies before they closed. He was an amazing man who helped keep spirits high for the 30 of us (or so), seeking shelter there.

Simon didn't stay. He returned to the property to search for our neighbours, finding them in the river. He rescued them and took them to safety. I believe after that, he returned a third time to look for another elderly local (who was safe already).

Karen, the cat and I were given shelter for a few days with a friend at Bawley Point, waiting until we could get back. I'd lost my car in the fire and was trapped there, unable to get hold of a vehicle to return once safe to do so.

Simon is a hero. He stayed in my fire damaged cabin with no food, no money and no vehicle and provided feed and water for the surviving wildlife until I got back 5 days later. It was tough here. No food, no car, no power or water. I wore the same socks and boots for a week. It was worth it. All but one of the kangaroos we treated for burns survived (one EU via vet). The last one, was a very special roo, 5-year old Clover. Raised here and released, I thought she would die on the first night and she came back into care with me in March when found lying in the forest unable to move. She is now back out there with her friends, a survivor. I'm thankful for the river and dams which saved many of their lives and I'm thankful to Simon, who saved mine.

<b>1.1 Causes and contributing factors</b>	Drought, build up of fuel, logging debris.
<b>1.2 Preparation and planning</b>	I did LOADS - 3 months of work in the lead up. Even the SES guys told me we were well prepared.
<b>1.3 Response to bushfires</b>	
<b>1.4 Any other matters</b>	
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