



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Leonard

Last name

White

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

I have been involved in local bush regeneration volunteering under Shoalhaven City Council for several years. Over that time, I have encountered significant resistance to hazard reduction burning and even keeping access track into Council managed land open and maintained. Significant experience with using fire as a method of bush regeneration and weed control leads me to conclude that the biggest issue for the fires was the extensive fuel loads, poorly maintained asset protections zones and other buffers (including fire-retardant native species) and poor access to several at risk areas preventing easy backburn and containment access. Bushland that has good access and has had the fuel load manually removed generally does not get hot enough in my experience to turn into a firestorm. Nevertheless, local government and other land managers seem to be divided on the importance of hazard reduction burning or allowing the many volunteer bush regeneration groups to engage in burning of any kind. Direct explanations for this have included that any

hazard reduction or pile burning is too much of a risk of getting away, that only fire-trained professionals should do any burning and that too many native animals will be killed or lose habitat when hazard reduction is completed.

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

1. Fuel load too high in many areas coupled with unusual drought.
2. Government and Local Government land managers resisting calls from bush volunteers, at risk communities, and at risk landowners to engage in hazard reduction on public and private land or allow those individuals more freedom to conduct hazard reduction activities themselves.
3. Inability of the public to legally remove fallen timber from public land areas surrounding at risk communities and inability of public to legally clear maintain asset protection zones beyond the existing minimum standards.

1.2 Preparation and planning

1. Very poor maintenance of firetrails in certain areas and poor mapping indicating accessible firetrails in areas where they are overgrown or simply never existed in the first place.
2. For volunteer groups on public land, the need to planning instruments and potentially environmental impact statements to be done before any hazard reduction work can happen continues to be a major barrier.
3. Continued approval of DAs with trees and bushland in very close proximity. In many areas, poor maintenance and deliberate encouragement of growth by landowners leads to dangerously high fuel loads extremely close to residences.
4. Situation of local government environmental protection regulations resulting in the bizarre situation where landowners can be fined for removing fuel load and clearing vegetation away from their boundaries.
5. Public land managers do not seem to have or follow any research on the impact of fuel loads and fire on the natural environment. Accordingly, the trade-off between the risks of bushfire and apparent environmental preservation appears to be determined fairly arbitrarily.

Supporting documents or images
