



I am making this submission as	Other
Submission type	Organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Long Beach Community Association Inc
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	Secretary
Consent to make submission public	Public
Your story	
1.1 Causes and contributing factors	<p>1. Causes and contributing factors</p> <p>Determining the causes of the fires are best left to experts who can weigh the contribution of the numerous adverse and individual factors which lined up to create the conditions for this last Mega-bushfire season.</p> <p>A major contributing factor to the extent and severity of the fires locally is the long term buildup of vegetation and fire load in the NSW native forests and the historic lack of support from State, Federal and Local governments to the efforts of concerned citizens and the RFS to mitigate this risk.</p> <p>Lessons in fire mitigation that should have been learned by government from the recent fires in Tathra and elsewhere were dismissed by some Eurobodalla Shire councilors and council staff members as anti-environmental.</p> <p>Environmental legislation has for many decades been slanted in</p>

favour of protecting and preserving vegetation, with little or no consideration given to the primary goal of government which is the protection of life, property and wellbeing of its citizens. Long Beach residents respect the need for habitat for native animals and birds. However, we contend that the balance between environmental objectives and safety issues must be reconsidered. Council has, over many years, been made aware of our concerns at the additional bushfire risk posed by introduced planting of flammable native shrubs and its minimal management in areas which block safe retreat to the beach.

1.2 Preparation and planning

2. Preparation and planning

A frequent comment in many of the meetings held by RFS to inform residents of the progress and risk options faced during this crisis, was that the RFS had been pilloried by the press in Sydney in the months leading up to the crisis, for creating a smoke haze during hazard reduction burns, which inconvenienced Sydney residents. State Government must take steps to educate Australians on the reality of living in an environment with extensive native forests. These must be made safe by regular hazard-reduction burns to reduce fuel load. Farms and bush housing in the vicinity of state forests and preserved trees must maintain a minimum safe cleared area and provide safe access for RFS units to undertake fuel load reduction burns on a regular basis. This may require the revision of some current Council attitudes to the application of State Environment Legislation. It may also require rethinking of Council plans to plant vegetation in open spaces in Environmental Zones where this may compromise the safety of residents in nearby homes, for example in Long Beach past introduced planting on the foreshore has compromised safe retreat to the beach. Major highways such as the Princes and the Kings Highway must not be allowed to be so vulnerable to fire that they are closed for extended periods when fires do occur. The disruption to the normal lives of regional Australians is a totally unacceptable result of insufficient safety factors built into the design and maintenance of these roads.

A further contributing factor to the trauma experienced by many South Coast residents was the loss of communications and power attributable to the vulnerability of networks caused by fuel build up in the surrounding forests

The LBCA's concern over the fuel loads left by forestry operations along the highway between Durras and Batemans Bay is shared by our neighbouring community associations. Forestry operations with slash and abandon practices as applied in the Benandrah State Forest and Mogo State Forest, must in future include drastic reductions to fuel loads after logging is completed. (No mining license is granted without arrangements for land to be rehabilitated, the same must now apply in forestry). As we are to face similar or more severe fire conditions in the future, the government must study whether the current volunteer system, with fractured resources scattered across thousands of sites, should be reinforced by an elite service organised along the lines of the Army Reserve. We suggest a reward structure based on call-ups.

Even the largest and most damaging bushfires start with small, localised flames and the best prospects for extinguishing are in the hours following ignition. Less catastrophic outcomes could be achieved with improved monitoring during high risk periods and the deployment of rapid response teams structured to serve in strategically located firefighting units, able to be deployed by air, land or sea, and trained and equipped to provide best practice levels of blaze containment in all terrains.

1.3 Response to bushfires

3. Response to bushfires

To provide the scientific basis for decision making at Federal and State government level, we advocate a service that will forensically investigate each and every bushfire in the future, to

determine causes and factors contributing to both its spread and its eventual containment, in order to develop a database for the study of fire mitigation and provide government with information which will allow improved prediction, response and mitigation in future bushfire seasons.

1.4 Any other matters

4. Any other matters

Consideration be given to the study of such fire management techniques as practiced by first nations, incorporating practitioners into RFS existing structures and applying this knowledge in hazard reduction burns before coming fire seasons. In the aftermath of the fires, permitted pile burns are reported to emergency services (000) and subsequent alerts sent via "Fires Near Me" app. This cascades into a flurry of social media posts and a heightened sense of insecurity among residents. We urge the RFS and State government to find a solution to this ongoing issue.

Upload files
