



Title	Mrs
First name	Lorraine
Last name	Bone
I am making this submission as	Resident
Submission type	Personal
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	
Consent to make submission public	Public
Your story	<p>On the morning of 31 December after a number of weeks of smoke filled air around our community I said to my husband there is the smell of fresh bushfire close by. I checked the Fires Near Me app but nothing was evident of any fires close by. After an hour or so smoke appeared to the north west of our village of Conjola Park. We continued to keep watch and kept checking the Fires Near Me app which did not reveal anything. At around 11 am the whole situation deteriorated with the heat of the day and strong winds. Helicopters appeared and started water bombing the area to the north west. After each drop of water the fire seemed to subside a little. This kept up for about half an hour and then the helicopters disappeared. Within 15 minutes the flames started to appear and it was at this stage we lost our water supply. For some reason as far as I am aware all the houses to the east of us still appeared to have water. It was at this time we drove the few hundred metres to the lake shore where one of our neighbours offered to take us on to the lake in</p>

his small boat. We stayed out on the lake for approximately 3 hours along with many other boats until the fire had subsided. Once we came back to shore the devastation was immense. I believe a total of 89 homes had been destroyed in our very small village. Our home was still standing but I noticed smoke coming from the roof when we were heading back towards our house. Luckily I saw a fireman and alerted him to the fact our roof was on fire. A fire brigade truck came and the firemen proceeded to extinguish the fire.

For the next hour or so I continued to put out smouldering areas surrounding our house with a bucket of water. It was during that time I noticed the back deck had caught alight. Again I alerted one of the firemen in the area and another fire brigade arrived to put the fire out. After about another hour of checking around the house to make sure nothing else was smouldering we left the area. Before we left the area I spoke with a gentleman who's home was still standing and asked whether he knew what had started the fire. He told me he had been out working near the highway to the north west of Conjola Park and the RFS and National Parks and Wildlife were conducting back burning or putting in containment lines. With the heat of the day and when the winds started to pick up they lost control of the fire. On that particular day also most of the local Fire Appliances had been sent further south to Bateman's Bay. I believe the story given by this gentleman to be accurate as he had previously worked with the NSW Fire Brigade so he had some insight in to what was happening.

My husband and I drove to Ulladulla so we could contact our family to let them know we were safe. There obviously was no power or phone signal at Conjola Park.

We stayed with friends for the next week. We were able to get a 6 month lease on a villa type home while we are waiting for our home to be repaired. Repairs only just began yesterday 30 March.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors	Hot day, strong winds not good conditions to be conducting back burning or putting in containment lines with very minimal back up support. If the helicopters had stayed in our area instead of being redeployed to the area down at the entrance of Lake Conjola the fire may never have come into Conjola Park.
1.2 Preparation and planning	The only type of preparation and planning was advice which was given to everyone in Australia about the bushfire season and precautions to be taken. The area of Conjola Park is not situated in the middle of the bush, it is on the shoreline of Lake Conjola, it is 1.5 km from the Princes Highway and it was quite a built up area of residential homes. Unfortunately you can't protect yourself from such negligence that was carried out that day by RFS and National Parks and Wildlife. There is an area where many people sought refuge from the flames at the lake's edge and at the boat ramp which is an area that has been neglected by Council and become overgrown with noxious weeds and trees that had caught alight causing great danger to people trying to escape the flames.
1.3 Response to bushfires	Council to maintain areas frequented by people for recreation and also in our case an area of safety from the flames. Whatever communication systems were being used were not helpful because for some reason the organisations giving advice on what was happening in our area and what needed to be done just did not happen.
1.4 Any other matters	I am glad we were able to get back to our house once the fire had passed because if we didn't we would no longer have our

home. I am aware of some people who stayed with their homes who obviously had water supply enabling them to be able to protect themselves and their homes. Water supply is obviously paramount.

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