

Maria Haren - NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry RESPONSE:
[submitted 21 May, 2020]

NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry – Terms of Reference

The Inquiry is to consider, and report to the Premier on, the following matters.

1. The causes of, and factors contributing to, the **frequency, intensity, timing and location of, bushfires in NSW in the 2019-20 bushfire season**, including consideration of any role of weather, drought, climate change, fuel loads and human activity.
2. The preparation and planning by agencies, government, other entities and the community for bushfires in NSW, including current laws, practices and strategies, and building standards and their application and effect.
3. Responses to bushfires, particularly measures to control the spread of the fires and to protect life, property and the environment, including:
 - immediate management, including the issuing of public warnings
 - resourcing, coordination and deployment
 - equipment and communication systems.
4. Any other matters that the inquiry deems appropriate in relation to bushfires.

And to make recommendations arising from the Inquiry as considered appropriate, including on:

5. Preparation and planning for future bushfire threats and risks.
6. Land use planning and management and building standards, including appropriate clearing and other hazard reduction, zoning, and any appropriate use of indigenous practices.
7. Appropriate action to adapt to future bushfire risks to communities and ecosystems.
8. Emergency responses to bushfires, including overall human and capital resourcing.
9. Coordination and collaboration by the NSW Government with the Australian Government, other state and territory governments and local governments.
10. Safety of first responders.
11. Public communication and advice systems and strategies.

Use the online form below to make a submission. You can also provide your feedback by:

- **Email:** inquiries@bushfireinquiry.nsw.gov.au
- **Post:** NSW Independent Bushfire Inquiry, GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001
- **Phone:** If you have limited computer or internet access you can make a submission over the phone by calling the Bushfire Customer Care program on 13 77 88
- **In-person:** at any [Service NSW service centre](#) or at a [Mobile Service Centre](#)
 - MY SUBS [ONLINE @ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/projects-and-initiatives/make-submission-to-bushfire-inquiry?fbclid=IwAR3muuSRd4-gCsR432aUiHMCaGN90T4yVvy5KLQMyzdsVZxJGPMRwJvrOoE>
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12. Maria Haren - RESPONSE: [submitted 21 May, 2020]

The Inquiry into bushfires in NSW in the 2019-20 bushfire season, is to consider, and report to the Premier on, the following matters:

- 1) The **Causes Of, And Factors Contributing To**, the frequency, intensity, timing and location of, bushfires in NSW in the 2019-20 bushfire season, including consideration of any role of weather, drought, climate change, fuel loads and human activity.
 - a) I agree with the Climate Council's position regarding this Criteria, [as restated in a Guardian online article, dated 13 May 2020, where it states: *"....Australia needs 'fast-attack strategies' to stop megafires forming, bushfire experts say. Exclusive: group of former fire and emergency services leaders tell bushfire royal commission rapid detection technologies are vital. Australia should deploy new "fast-attack strategies" to combat bushfires and stop small remote blazes turning into unstoppable mega fires, a group of 33 former fire and emergency services leaders have said."*
- 2) The **Preparation And Planning By Agencies**, government, other entities and the community for bushfires in NSW, including current laws, practices and strategies, and building standards and their application and effect. Blue Mountains City Council response to this is, currently in accordance with their **BFMC Bushfire Risk Management Plan, published 2014**, which however, is now due for review, in order to incorporate updates to the Criteria of land zoning & building management, and all other related suggestions by this Committee's submissions!
- 3) **Responses To Bushfires, Particularly Measures To Control The Spread Of The Fires And To Protect Life, Property And The Environment**, including:
 - a) **Immediate Management**, including the issuing of **Public Warnings**; **Public Warnings** should be in multiple forms, as I knew of local citizens who were 'still unaware' of the extent of the prior Bushfires in late December 2019, and even though she had a "Bushfire app"; she didn't know how to properly use it, and the same applied for the RFS website, so I had to demonstrate their use to her. Therefore, for the larger percentage of mostly older residents in the BMCC areas, there needs to be more printed media, as that is the information source they are used to using.
 - b) **Resourcing, Coordination And Deployment**:

After speaking to my local MP – Blue Mtns Council Mayor, Mark Greenhill on 25 December, 2019, he stated to me at the time that there was an inadequate amount of resources that affected the fire management of the 'Gosper's Fire', in particular, which he said would have not spread as far as it did, if there was the amount of fire/aerial bombing that had happened in the 2013 fire. This was mentioned to me, as I raised concerns as to 'Why there had been no sound of overhead helicopters or aircraft as there had been in 2013 bushfires?', Which I experienced in 2013, living between Faulconbridge school, Norman Lindsay's [National Trust Property], the latter where one fire existed, and another fire already progressing at Winmalee/Yellow Rock.
 - c) **Equipment And Communication Systems**.
- 4) Any other matters that the inquiry deems appropriate in relation to bushfires.

And to make recommendations arising from the Inquiry as considered appropriate, including on:

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BAL Building Standards Need to be more readily available. My home is over 40 yrs old, and needs renovations but while there have been a few Council/RFS-sponsored "Home Bush Fire Management" seminars on the general topic, it seems to favour new building requirements, so there needs to be Council appointed staff [in the Building/Assets Approval departments] who are versed in discussing BAL Requirements for older home renovations, as well as newer home construction. This is currently **NOT THE CASE** with Blue Mtns City Council, & it is quite hard [if not 'next to impossible'] to even **OBTAIN/ACCESS** the full text of BAL Requirements. Therefore, home owners are forced to discuss such requirements, only with potential Building company renovators, [who will **NOT IMPART ANY KNOWLEDGE**] unless they 'come onsite to do a quote!!

5) **Preparation And Planning For Future Bushfire Threats And Risks.**

From a February 28, 2020 National Parks Assn. of NSW [NPA] online article, titled: "*Blue Mountains World Heritage & Bushfire*" by Roger Lembit, Ecologist: "*The National Parks of the Blue Mountains, which form the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, have been the site of extensive and unprecedented bushfires, which have raised concern internationally about the status of these parks.*" And that" **The 2019-20 bushfires have burnt through around 80% of the GBMWH as at 6th January 2020.** While on-ground post-fire assessments are yet to occur, it is inevitable that there has been considerable impact on the biological and geological elements that contribute to these values.

[see link - <https://npansw.org.au/2020/02/28/blue-mountains-world-heritage-and-bushfire/>]

Regarding the future planning required, including the review of the current and former World Heritage status; will need, it states further – ".....*The Strategic Plan for the GBMWH was completed in 2009. The year 2020 will be the 20th Anniversary of the inscription of the site on the World Heritage list. A new Strategic Plan is under review. Further review is desirable, learning from the experience of these bushfires and other issues which have arisen since the current strategic plan was published. The individual park plans, including Wollemi, Blue Mountains and Kanangra-Boyd have been identified for review some years ago. It is timely for funding to be provided for a comprehensive review and public appraisal of planning for these key parks within the GBMWH.*

Having visited the Mt Tomah Botanical Gardens on 30 January, 2020, I can attest to the complete devastation of all forested areas from Lithgow upwards, along the Bell's Line of Rd that I travelled on. Therefore, to axe further future funding of the CRC, would **NOT** be in the best interests of **URGENTLY NEEDED REVIEW**, as stated in a March Climate Council Press Release, titled: "*Government Must Fund Ongoing Bushfire Research*":

1.1.1. In response to this criteria, I quote from Climate Council website Press Release, dated 5 March. 2020, titled: "Government Must Fund Ongoing Bushfire Research " "*.....The Climate Council is calling on the Federal Government to provide funding for ongoing research into bushfires following news that the organisation dedicated to such research will be axed. Funding for the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) will cease on June 30, 2021 despite Australia just experiencing one of its worst fire seasons on record.*"

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Land Use Planning And Management And Building Standards, including appropriate clearing and other hazard reduction, zoning, and any appropriate use of indigenous practices.

Blue Mountains City Council response to this Criteria is, as part of the Rural Fires Act 1997 & the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC), and as a current member of one of it's **Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC)**, states, " *The settlements border the Blue Mountains National Park which is part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWhA). **The GBMWhA was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2000.** The area was listed because it: // Possesses outstanding examples of ecological and biological processes significant in the evolution of ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; and // Contains important and significant natural habitats for the conservation of biological diversity, including threatened species of outstanding value".*

The **BFMC Bushfire Risk Management Plan, published 2014**, is now due for review, in order to incorporate updates to the Criteria of land zoning & building management, and all other related suggestions by this Committee's submissions, [I quote – "... Chapter 4. Performance Monitoring and Reviewing - 4.1 Review : This **BFRMP must be reviewed and updated within each successive five-year period** from the constitution of the BFMC, or more often as identified by the BFMC. The Blue Mountains BFMC will also review this Plan as necessary to account for any changes in context or risk. This may be triggered by a range of circumstances, including but not limited to: // changes to the BFMC area, organisational responsibilities or legislation; // changes to the bush fire risk in the area; and/ or // following a major fire event. "

2. Appropriate Action To Adapt To Future Bushfire Risks To Communities And Ecosystems.

2.1.1. Emergency Responses To Bushfires, Including Overall Human And Capital Resourcing.