



## Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Ron

Last name

Salz

## 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

## 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

See attached document.

1.2 Preparation and planning

See attached document.

**1.3 Response to bushfires**

See attached document.

**1.4 Any other matters**

See attached document.

## **Supporting documents or images**

**Attach files**

- Fires Submission.docx

I am the coordinator for 2 Community Fire Units in [REDACTED] Leura and have been a Leura resident for 67 years. I was present during the 1957 Leura fires as an eight year old.

I just have a list of comments some pros and cons.

Pros:

- We had regular patrols from RFS and Fire and Rescue around our streets, especially after the Ruined Castle fire commenced. This was very reassuring and they were able to respond quickly to a couple of local outbreaks.
- 'Fires Near Me' ok but sometimes delayed.
- Healing Ideas – The Blue Mountains Cultural Centre had an exhibition sharing photos from the fires, which we found cathartic. The trauma associated with these events should not be underestimated. We lived in smoke for months starting with back burns in October 2019.

Cons:

- Our local RFS teams had their trucks seconded to fight the fires in the north of the state. This left us in a parlous state. RFS had to cobble together units that were far inferior. The attendant delay also made it difficult for our teams to be as effective.
- We get a lot of tour busses (several a day), which continued to come during the fires. The tourists entered the National Park even when they were closed. They would go around the barriers or under the tape. This put more strain on us as volunteers monitoring the situation.  
**Suggest that police turn tourist busses back during fire events and even during days of Total Fire Ban. A single patrol car on the Great Western Highway at Glenbrook would be sufficient.**
- Katoomba/Leura etc. was like an Island. We were surrounded by fire without any clear plans for either evacuation (probably impossible with only one road). There were no designated safe places either.
- The ruined Castle Fire was left far too long. This was called in by a neighbour who saw the lightning strike. The fire and could have been dealt with very quickly. My understanding is that it was given low priority by personnel in the control centre.
- There are many communication 'dead spots' in our region. This, linked with the failure of some mobile towers, made communication impossible at times. **Satellite phones for the RFS would make sense.**

- 'Fires Near Me' at times was not updated. We had a fire a few kilometres to our east (Kings Tableland) that we saw at 10.00pm that did not show up. I called the control centre in Katoomba and they did not know about it! "Do you mean the Megalong fire?" was the response. This uncertainty was stressful in that we had wind shifts that meant the fire might have directly impacted us.
- Air quality needs to be monitored. The current project (Koala) is to be shut down. This was valuable for us knowing what the air quality was. It allowed us to limit our movements to those times air quality improved. We are still suffering the effects from the smoke.

Our son was also in Lake Conjola at the time it was under threat. He is a member of one of our CFU's. His training as a CFU member was invaluable in helping the local community. Because of his knowledge he was able to assess the situation, calm people down, and help them prepare their properties for the danger. The local RFS had been called away to other areas and could not get back in as the roads were blocked. They had no equipment other than garden rakes and sprinklers. The scary part for us was the loss of communication for several days.