



Title	Ms
First name	Sally
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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>Shoalhaven Bushfires - 21.12.2019 and 04.01.2020 Bushfires flared up to the South of Sanctuary Point on 21.12.2020. I am a resident of Sanctuary Point, but also work at [REDACTED]. On this particular day, my partner and I headed to the Sanctuary Point Boat Ramp to see where the smoke was in the area. We are both keen boaties and know the waterways of St Georges Basin very well.</p> <p>On arrival at the boat ramp we discovered that Emergency Services Centre had brought in Surf Life Savers from Wollongong (and surrounds) to assist with vacating residents from Sussex Inlet, should the fires impact that area. The Country Club - St Georges Basin was an evacuation centre.</p>

The classic thing is, and everyone knows in Sanctuary Point and surrounding suburbs like Basin View, Erowal Bay and St Georges Basin - that once the southerly picks up by 11.00am you do not go out on The Basin.

Many anglers have lost lives out in the middle of the Basin. So I found it very strange that the Emergency Evacuation Centre would direct Surf Life Saving Crews in rubber duckies (2 to a crew) to head across one of the most treacherous bays to rescue residents from Sussex Inlet - who couldn't fit in the vessel anyway?? Even more ridiculous is the fact that the time it took to get across the Basin, they would have no fuel left and nowhere to refuel.

What made matters worse, is when the southerly hit - the crews had no headlamps - no protective face masks for the smoke - some had wetsuits - some had no spare clothes at all - only a few had goggles - THE SKY WAS BLACK - THEY COULD NOT SEE??

Plus they had no GPS sounders to guide them to Sussex Inlet, and only that we knew the area, could we guide them along the shoreline and then into the Sussex Inlet Channel...not knowing the area at all they hit many sandbanks along the way..

What made matters worse - these guys had set up tents directly into the southerly and had no protection. I had Council keys to open up the gates to a local park - they drove in and set up behind trees.

I put a call out on the local Facebook page for assistance - our community rallied together to bring in water, chairs, food, coffee for warmth and we supplied 6 headlamps and towels...the local cafe owner who was stuck in Sussex Inlet, managed to get back to Sanctuary Point to make them all breakfast...the local caravan park at Sanctuary Point put them up for free if they didn't have accommodation.

I took photos of this day, and let me tell you when they went out across the Basin I actually thought they were not going to return and this was the final photo that would be in the newspapers....

Luckily the crews returned - they mentioned it was the worst conditions they had ever been in - surf chop is very different to the white caps on the Basin. It was constant chop for 40 minutes??

Who the hell were they going to evacuate....this was totally ridiculous

To make matters worse, Sanctuary Point Boat Ramp had massive amounts of weed on it from the winds, so the boats couldn't launch on the ramp...the boat ramp is not capable of being an Emergency Evacuation spot and needs an upgrade...

On 4 January the SLSA team came back again. Another rescue point from Sanctuary Point to Sussex Inlet - a new group this time - they at least had food and camp gear - however once again no head lamps - no face masks - rubber duckies that weren't suitable and no gps co-ordinate to get to Sussex Inlet or Basin View.

This time the wind came up in a different direction more from Basin View. So the rubber duckies would have to get to Basin View - but that was even further than Sussex Inlet and in a totally different direction.

I was able to advise the lifesaver in charge that they would be better served heading to St Georges Basin Boat Ramp by car and then taking the rubber duckies across from there. It would be safer to bring back stranded residents as well - The Country Club - St Georges Basin could then get the Club Bus to take them to the Evacuation Centre.

I am sharing this story so that in future disaster events, the evacuation team on the water are not putting their lives in danger as well. The RFS would also be better served to have a fireboat to put fires out in Sussex Inlet and Basin View and Wandandian...

I worked at the Royal Motor Yacht Club at Broken Bay and we co-ordinated an Emergency Evacuation event for fires on vessels and on land that could not be reached by road - and let me tell you, the resources on Pittwater and the Hawkesbury are far superior that are on The Basin. It wouldn't be hard however as they have 0 resources for on-water emergency evacuations.

Early December, 4 tourists to the area (of Asian appearance) went fishing on The Basin on a very windy day in a small tinny from Sanctuary Point Boat Ramp. The boat tipped as they got to the white caps. Three tourists were saved by floating across to Wrights Beach. The fourth was rescued by helicopter. The weed was so thick, that Emergency Services could not launch their boat - it took 10 minutes to get the boat through the weed and back on to the trailer...another instance of lack of resources at this particular boat ramp.

Thank you for your time.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors	Bushfires from Sussex Inlet - Lake Conjola - Wandandian - Bewong
1.2 Preparation and planning	No planning for such a major event - rescue by water without correct gear - no headlamps - no face masks - no goggles - no gps
1.3 Response to bushfires	The Surf Lifesavers were going to somehow rescue residents who were affected by the bushfires - they were let down by their equipment and lack of resources
1.4 Any other matters	Boat ramp at Sanctuary Point needs upgrading to emergency status level. This includes better launching and retrieving facilities. Maybe shower facilities for rescuers, cooking facilities (eg gas bbqs)
Upload files	2019.12.21-142542-Bushfire-Sanctuary-Point-Large.jpg - Download File 2020.01.05-FB-IMG-1578199290629-Bushfire-Sanctuary-Point.jpg - Download File SLSA-travel-from-Sanctuary-Point-to-Sussex-Inlet-and-Basin-View.JPG - Download File



