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| Title | Ms |
| First name | Ellen |
| Last name | Jennings |
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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>We were aware of the Currowan Fire, but never dreamed it would join the Tianjara fire and come up as fast as it did. When Tianjara started, we received texts to evacuate 19 Dec. My husband stayed home, my son and I evacuated, spending \$150 at an airbnb that night. We went back the next day and it was very smokey, but we didn't need to evacuate, thus out of pocket. I was at work the following day at St Georges Basin, but left early as all I could think about were the fires. We chose not to travel to Sydney on XMAS day to see family as we were concerned the bushfire speed limits & threat of fires around South West sydney were not worth the risk. We were given a credit for the lunch we couldn't have at Campbelltown RSL which was really good of them. We did have to evacuate before xmas and stayed at the corner of Wandean Rd & Princes Hwy while we watched the fire create it's own storm.</p> <p>We shared a wonderful XMAS day here with our neighbours and</p> |

shared what food we had on the bbq. It brought our community closer. I was supposed to go back to work on the days during xmas break, but as our main road out, Wandean Rd, had a variety of different road personnel there, it was unclear whether we could or couldn't get back in. If there is one thing that needs to change, is the way these road blocks are enforced. There was absolutely no checking of ID to make sure those coming into a closed area were residents. I suggested staff should do that.... but not once were we asked. I was also EXTREMELY unimpressed seeing them sit there smoking rolled cigarettes during such conditions. Can you imagine, with our air already smoke filled and we don't know if there will be health issues in the future, but having to roll the car window down and having that smell and smoke adding to it? I really think, not if, but when the next firestorms come, the defence reserves should be deployed. They will follow direction to the letter of the law and either let residents come in or not. Wandean Rd was closed for so long and it really depended on who was there at the time. That should not be the case.

But back to the fires.... we chose to stay and defend, though New Years Eve was a disaster. We lost power, internet, mobile sporadically. We found the ArcGIS RFS map was the most useful tool ever. It was what made us aware Sussex Inlet turnoff at Princes Hwy was hotspotting. We had what we needed to get out, but we still didn't think we needed to. My husband and I walked to the front of our 2.5 acres (lots of trees!) and saw 2 small RFS utes come flying down our street (Hayward Rd) and into Bill Wellman's property to see where the fire was. They saw us and stopped... saying.... if you are going to leave, get out NOW!

Frank and I said we'd stay and as we walked back to our home, the sky started to go dark and I said Frank, (hearing this roaring) is that choppers or fire? He is Navy and works with helicopters. He said, that's not choppers.... And then the sky went black with an orange tinge & smoke ash. We made the decision to go. I threw my poor little dog who was really unwell, into the car. I yelled at Frank to get my son's playstation... and then seeing things were even worse within those minutes, I said 'F the playstation, just go!!' For me, it was a terrifying drive. We had already taken our Audi Roadster & Kawasaki Ninja to the Lifestyle village I work at (St Georges Basin), to garage them safely. So we left in our 2 remaining cars. I could barely see and was having a panic attack as I was so scared. I had no idea where the fire was. I got to the highway and was directed to Wandandian Progress Hall. I could see the fire coming up the Princes Hwy and thought what the hell? Why are we putting our cars in the path? I drove in and stayed in the car. I was fear struck. My husband belted on the window and insisted I got out with our dog and get inside the centre. We had no power and we had access to some (not many) tea towels soaked in water. We were sitting there, probably 50 of us, in a smoke filled room and fire all around us, seeing it come up the side and in front and continue to Bewong.

We got back home around 11pm that night, no power, but grateful our home survived. The fear of not knowing was the worst. Sitting there seeing the glow of the fire, thinking that's it, we had lost everything. This fire just changed directions with creating it's own fire storms. We are avid users of MetEye, but the fire took on a life of it's own....

Then came the southerly. We had a fire in the gully behind us and though it was smoldering, once the southerly hit, it just fired up and blew fire debris onto our neighbours block then ours. We were left without any firetrucks at Wandandian as they'd all been sent down south to Manyana..... forget now which other area. But

My husbands plan was our son Luke and he would battle any fire outside and I was supposed to monitor our front and back bullnose verandas for ember attacks. But when I saw it blow white smoke everywhere, I panicked, threw our little dog in the car and screamed at my son & Frank to leave.

I went back to Wandandian Progress Hall and waited. I went back home a couple of hours later and realised if they hadn't stayed, we were at a huge risk. As they were battling the spot fires on our neighbours block and then ours, someone saw them and offered to get the water truck guy to help. Without him, I don't think we'd be here. Frank only had a 15lt water pack with a manual pump on Luke's back. Then we has rushing buckets of water. We are on tank water and when power is out, no water.

Anyway, I'm really proud of them for what they did. I also saw our new neighbour Josh spend all of his waking hours driving around with a cube of water, putting out smoldering fires where he could. I have met more of our community through this crisis than I would ever have done. I helped facilitate a wonderful man who offered 20000 litres of water to anyone who needed it, to get to those ran out keeping their properties safe. He had put out a call on Facebook.

Anyway, there's more, but enough for now :)

Thanks for listening x

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1.2 Preparation and planning

1.3 Response to bushfires

1.4 Any other matters

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