

Your details

Title

Ms

First name

Helen

Last name

Mower

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

Your story

I am a survivor of the Ash Wednesday bushfires in South Australia 1983. I lost my home, I was hospitalised with burns and had my first child born 5 weeks later whilst I was still hospitalised. I moved to the NSW North Coast, Nambucca Valley in 1985 with my husband and child. We moved to a property of 50 acres, 17 kms from Bowraville. We sought an environment which was wetter and lush compared to the dry conditions of the S.Aust environment which recorded regular bushfire seasons.. We lived on the river flats close to the North Arm River which would be a safer location v. the timbered hills of the valleys. We were very aware of the threat of bushfire and were prepared with water tanks and pumps should the need arise.....with the 2019 bushfires of 8 November, although the threat of ember attack was possible on many occasions, the property was not impacted by the Kian Road Bushfire

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

Since I moved to the Nambucca Valley in 1985 I have monitored the changes to the local environment. Changed weather conditions being drier have been a driver of increased bushfire danger and that further increases in global temperature are likely to increase the length and severity of fire season, therefore restrict the window of opportunity for safe and effective hazard reduction burning and increase the costs and the risk to the community from bushfire events across NSW and in QLD, VIC and SA.

1.2 Preparation and planning

The NSW Government should recognise the body of scientific evidence that strongly specifies only very recently burned areas may reduce fire severity under extreme and catastrophic fire weather conditions. Under these conditions areas hazard reduced, particularly those treated over more than 1 year previously, are unlikely to provide substantial fire suppression benefits. We observed State Forest areas, where hazard reduction burns were undertaken where possible and also grazed by cattle, did not reduce suppression benefits. Dry lightening strikes and burning off in severe weather conditions were responsible for bushfires in this region. There is no scientific evidence to show that grazing or logging will reduce fire risk and both can be devastating to threatened species such as koalas and damage natural processes.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Despite the amazing efforts of our local RFS volunteers and those employed by State Forests, and the NSW Parks & Wildlife Service who were the first responders to the bushfires with the increasing frequency of lighting ignitions in remote areas, various technologies and strategies for rapid extinguishing of these fires must be investigated, including an increase in the use of remote area firefighting teams. Property owners as well as elders in the Aboriginal communities with local knowledge and fire history should also be consulted. The communication between the various agencies|firefighting teams involved in the bushfires was fragmented and lacked a single coordinated strategy. There are many strategies used in firefighting, the benefits and costs of each needs to be assessed to determine their effectiveness and what their detrimental outcomes for the environment are.

1.4 Any other matters

The "Fires Near Me" App was invaluable in linking local residents to updates regarding the local bushfire situation, but it has been acknowledged by the NSW RFS that "real time" maps and information was delayed and did not give accurate information in emergencies. So much research and information was available to governments - federal, state and locals following the devastating bushfires of Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday and many others following, as our climate of changed and became drier, and rainfall less predictable (and drought took hold of vast areas of Australia), warnings were not heeded in my opinion to develop appropriate Bushfire Management Plans and funding was not provided to resources the existing agencies and firefighting teams to cope with the unprecedented bushfire season Australia has ever experienced.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- AshWednesday1983Stats.JPG
- 7.12.19 fire map.jpg
- NambuccaHeadsArial_Dec2018_2019Bushfires.jpg

Victoria and South Australia

Ash Wednesday Bushfire, 1983



Quick Statistics

75	Fatalities
1500	Injured
176 Million	Insurance Costs
2000	Homes Destroyed

Prior to the events on Ash Wednesday, a drought lasting ten months had dried out the eastern Australian forests. The context on 16 February was characterised by heatwave conditions, low humidity and strong to gale force winds. Temperatures varied between the high thirties to mid forties over most of eastern South Australia and Victoria, with relative humidity generally at less than 15 per cent.

In Victoria, 47 people died, 150,000 hectares were burnt, 1620 houses and more than 1500 other buildings were destroyed and 32,400 livestock were lost.

In South Australia, 28 people died, including three Country Fire Service volunteer firefighters. More than 1500 people were injured, 383 homes and 200 other buildings were destroyed and 160 000 hectares were burnt.

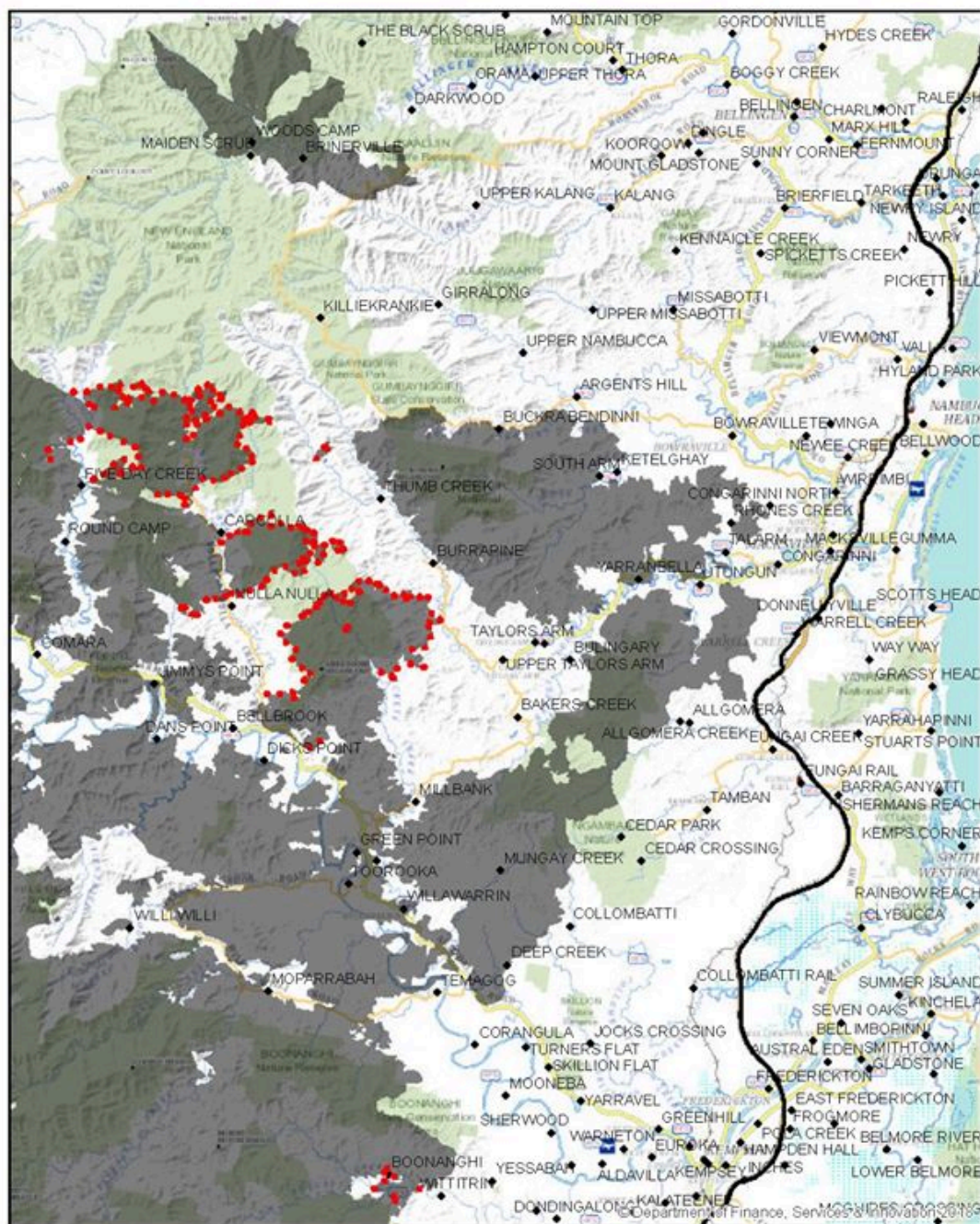
The Insurance Council of Australia estimated the 1983 damage for Victoria at \$138 million and South Australia at \$38 million; the 2011 estimated repeated cost was \$1489 million for Victoria and \$307

Related Resources

[AJEM Oct 2017 - Exercise Exchange](#)
Student: student skills on fire

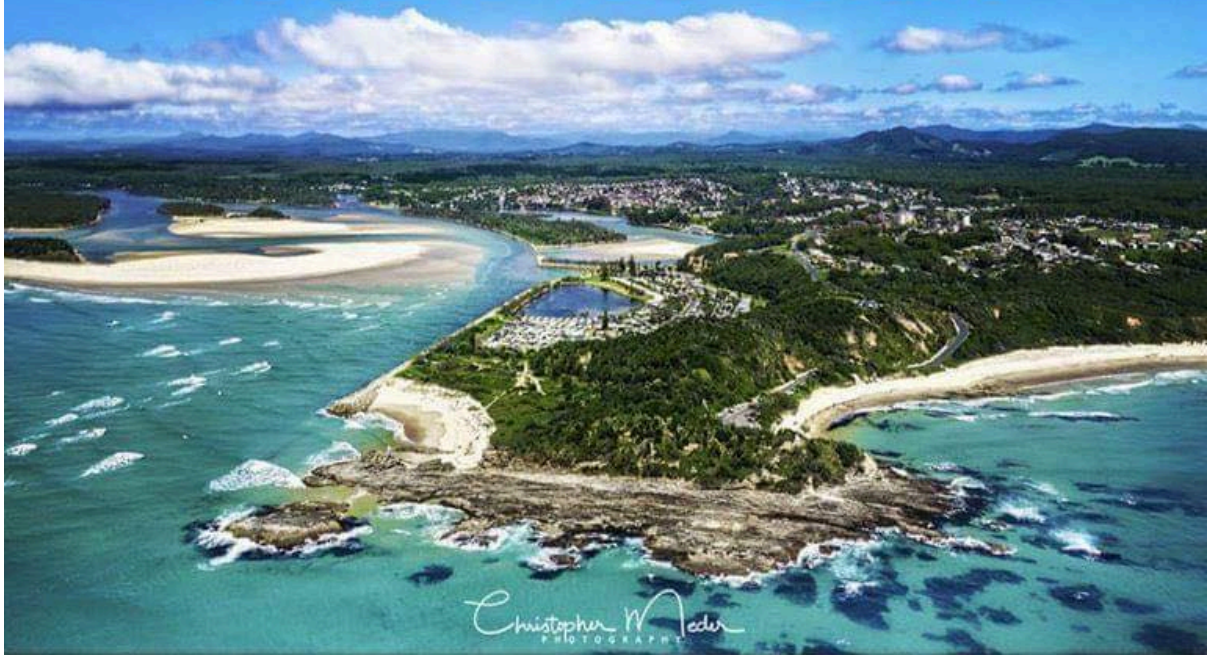
[AJEM Jul 2015 - Managing spontaneous volunteers in emergencies: a local government perspective](#)

[AJEM Apr 2013 - Place matters](#)



PRODUCTION INFORMATION		LEGEND		WARNING INFORMATION	
<div> KEMPSEY</div> <div>Carrai East Complex Public Liaison Map</div>	Plot Information: Date: 7/12/2019 Time: 09:03:21	<div></div> 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Nambucca Heads - Dec 2018



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