



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Ian

Last name

Hibberson

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

Before I start please note: There is a WIFI Blackspot in Broulee which causes around 400 Homes to get either poor reception (1/2 or one bar) or no reception. This has been the case for more than 6 years since I arrived back living here in 2014.

On the day of the 30th of December many text messages and warnings were put out on ABC Radio. ABC radio were receiving calls from many people about the bushfires. These calls were coming in from people in hot spots. Many of the calls were from the Tomerong/ Sussex Inlet region at the time. There was a small amount of focus on the Eurobodalla region but much of the conversation was around the approaching fire, but no real talk of evacuation, more of watch and act. However during the night of the 30th / to the early morning of the 31st December 2019, conditions deteriorated rapidly. The NSW Government sent out evacuation orders / or people can stay and defend if they wished. I have an extreme disability with

Osteoarthritis in my hip, and lower back. I also have weight issues which have exacerbated my condition and I am waiting on Sleeve surgery. This is important to note. No text messages were received to evacuate because of the Black spot. Also the ABC radio had gone off the air temporarily. There was a lot of panic in the area as people could not get news or updates. The power had also been cut so there was no way of knowing where the fire was. A road block (yellow and black) was placed in front of Broulee road (Broulee is relatively flat so it is hard to see a fire coming from the hills). No one could see where it was. Myself and a few others removed the road block temporarily to drive up the hill near the Broulee cemetery. The skies were dark and smoke filled and visibility was poor. I had my lights on at around 8.30 am. I saw what I could only describe as a large comet hit the earth, a fireball of about 40 feet was approaching the princes Highway coming our way fast. I drove back to Broulee township (replacing the barrier with some help from another driver) He made the comment that the barrier should not have been placed in the spot it was. I agreed, there were at least 3 farms it would have been blacking from getting out. Since seeing what I as a large orange ball of fire in the blackness of a hellish morning. I spoke to as many people as I could including my neighbours. I packed up essentials, I had a esky ready from the night before, with my diabetes medication in it packed with a cold ice-brick and some food just in case the power had gone out, Which it had. There was a lot of confusion in the streets because of no Wi-Fi, other regions like Moruya still had it as they told me later. May of us in the streets agreed to fill our large green Waste Gardening Bins full of water and leave it out for the fireies if needed. I also left a hose out the front. It took me quite along time to pack due to my injuries. With little warning i packed. I managed to get the ABC radio again as it was temporarily on and off the air. They repeatedly said go to the evacuation centre in Moruya, but did not say where it was or what structure it was. It would have been nice if the council had notified people a few days before that where theses evacuation centres where. They had more of an idea of when the fires where going to hit and so had more time to plan. Eventually after an hour of driving around, I found someone in the street who said try the Basketball centre but did not give me a street address. I eventually found it. The Evacuation centre was extremely well planned NOTE ON DAY 3. There was no generators to light up the hall. remember it was dark like night with smoke so they closed the doors not to let smoke in. but remember it was close to 40 degrees. No fans were working as there were not generators! My Brother evacuated to the Broulee surf club, which did not open. The ABC radio told people to go there (from a council direction) but no one told the Broulee Surf club owners. people arrived and it was closed. it eventually opened and had to close as the fire was getting close.

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

1. Bad wifi in Broulee, blackspot
2. lack of communication from council
3. Fire hit Abc radio towers and lost communication
4. No industrial size generators own by the council!
5. Confusion over enlisting and registering
6. Road closure signs put in too early or wrong locations

1.2 Preparation and planning

1. greater communication - as the council and NSW fire new the fires were coming and lack of planning on how to get out of the

region

2. Generators in the evacuation centres.

3. No extension leads- there were only about 5 power points in the basketball court and everyone wanted to use them to charge phones (when the generators arrived on day 2)

4. I had to use power to operate my sleep apnea machine, along with another lady next to me.

5. People wanted to charge phones and torches etc. no power boards, or extension leads was a massive problem. within the evacuation centre

6. The speaker that came on the second night to give us an update (there was a generator operating) had no microphone and we could not hear them and we constantly had to say speak up! Remember there were many elderly people in the evacuation centre that are hard of hearing.

So no microphone was an issue. If I had have known this. I had one at my house as I was a qualified film maker and kept lots of studio equipment, but one does not think to pack this during a fire!

7. The toilets in the mens were rarely cleaned and lead to a gastro outbreak, But rather than clean it with debtol and scrub it they stuck a sign on it not to use. but it was the only toilet with a locking door. The useable toilet had no lock and people could see you sitting on the loo. There were 2 toilets to around 400 people until portaloos arrived 2 days late!

8. I had my pet cockatiel with me in his cage and many people had cats and dogs constantly barking day and night and would not take them outside to calm them down. A member of the RSPCA or vet would have help ad many animals were stressed and upset.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Poor on communications - slow to act - re-active rather than proactive. I learnt things on the ABC radio before the council new them. Perhaps infrastructure such as power should be in the future placed underground! - By day 3 things were better. A lady fainted from the heat as there was no fans.

lack of chairs in the basketball court. I needed to sit most of the time. Every-time I got up someone took my seat and I had constantly ask people to vacate my seat.

Basic things, like batteries, torches, power leads, generators, bottles of water, and basic food could have been provided early on. It was day 2-3 by the time this happened.

1.4 Any other matters

all said above

Supporting documents or images
