



Title	Mr
First name	Peter
Last name	Clark
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>My name is Peter Clark, I am the Senior Deputy Captain of the Tyringham Rural Fire Brigade, which is located near Dorrigo NSW 2453. Our community was impacted by the Bees Nest Fire on 6th Sept 2019 and for the next few months by various other fires.</p> <p>My comments below are my personal views and not necessarily the views of the RFS or even my local brigade. I could raise numerous topics for the consideration of the Inquiry but I would like to concentrate on just four main points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fires should be extinguished quickly by all available resources, regardless of the immediate cost.- More burning WON'T HELP. We have to get smarter and more strategic with hazard reduction.- Forestry Corporation logging practices make fires very difficult, if not impossible to control.

- Rainforests, a natural, environmental resource worth protecting, or no value?

- Fires that start in remote locations are rarely given aerial support early. The reason for this is the funding comes directly from each agency's budget [whether RFS, NPWS or Forest Corp]. All these agencies have had their budgets reduced and nobody wants to authorise aerial support to keep the fire at bay until ground crews and other resources can be dispatched. It is only when a Section 44 is declared more aerial support is readily available. By then it is often too late. This was clearly demonstrated in the Bees Nest Fire. A different funding model has to be found to ensure adequate resources can be dispatched in a timely manner -Regardless of land tenure or which agency is initially 'responsible' Wildfires have no regard for land tenure and firefighting funding should reflect this fact.

- There were many examples of areas that had done hazard reduction burning but the fires still raced through and both houses and lives were lost. In extreme or catastrophic conditions, unless you have permanent 'scorched earth' conditions over most of the land, hazard reduction makes very little difference to the intensity of the fires. The research and evidence clearly shows intensive hazard reduction, not necessarily burning, close to dwellings and communities has the most effect in reducing the intensity of fires and the impact of fires on built environment. The Government setting hazard reduction percentage quotas of land that must be burnt each year for land management agencies is not based on any science and is just not effective. While it is easy for bureaucrats to tick boxes and say 'it's done', it is definitely not the best way to get the desired outcome i.e. protect communities from fire and protecting and maintaining the Natural Environment

We have to get much smarter and implement the research already done by the BNHCRC [Bushfire & Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre] and others to achieve a better result, both for humans and the environment.

I believe we need to:

- Conduct much more Indigenous, cultural burning which is location and time specific and takes a whole of landscape approach. This will take time and training but will achieve better results, both for protecting humans, dwellings and the environment.

- Do more intensive, intelligent hazard reduction around communities and dwellings. This does not mean burning every year but could involve modifying the environment by changing the types of trees and undergrowth around villages. It would be site specific and based on science and local knowledge. It would not be the easy tick box approach we have now but, done properly and with the cooperation and engagement of the local community, would produce superior results.

One thing is certain. Giving farmers permission to conduct their own hazard reduction burns without supervision will not achieve safer outcomes and will be a disaster for the environment.

- The practice of leaving log dumps and tree heads in forests after logging makes it very difficult, if not impossible to control fires in these areas. Just conducting a back burn is difficult when encountering a log dump or a large area of tree heads. The burn has to be then done around these obstacles in the hope the burn will hold. Once a fire gets into a log dump it can burn for days, if not weeks, posing a continuous hazard for reigniting other areas. It does not make sense to me that on one hand Government is mandating hazard reduction burning quotas but Forest Corp is able to contribute vast quantities of fuel for the next wildfire.

These piles cannot be burnt safely in a hazard reduction burn, they are usually too large. They are just a large hazard and a way should be found to not create them when logging. Or alternatively find a way make this 'waste' a profitable resource. e.g. Turn it into wood chips and sell to the gardening industry. The practice of felling and leaving logs extends to road construction. In our area on the north coast after road widening works the trees felled are just left beside the road causing a future fire hazard. Many roadways, which should be at least a small fire break are actually fire hazards due to all the trees felled and left beside the road. The logs should be sold or mulched. If it makes road construction more expensive, it must be factored in when costing the road construction. This practice was clearly shown after the recent fires when the trees felled to reopen the Grafton-Armidale Road were just left beside the road. 'Someone else's responsibility?'

- In 'normal' fire seasons rainforests usually do not burn. Fires stop at the edge, or only burn in a short distance. However this season, after extended dry periods, many rainforests did burn. Some didn't burn completely and slowed the rate of spread of the fires but much damage has been caused and these areas will probably never recover. Forest Corp places no value on rainforest and they are lowest on the list of RFS priorities. There was much media hype about saving the Wollemi Pines, however many equally environmentally important rainforest areas in the north coast burnt either from lack of resources or lack of interest in saving them. I totally understand the importance of saving lives and homes but much more emphasis needs to be placed on saving our important natural heritage areas.

In closing although the loss of homes, businesses and lives has been incredibly sad I believe the greatest loss in the 2019 fire season is the natural environment, both the fauna and flora. Which, ultimately is our human loss because it is the Natural Environment which keeps us humans alive on this planet. Therefore any changes we make to our firefighting procedures should have, as much as possible, the preservation of the natural environment as one of the top priorities.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Fires that start in remote locations are rarely given aerial support early. The reason for this is the funding comes directly from each agency's budget [whether RFS, NPWS or Forest Corp] . All these agencies have had their budgets reduced and nobody wants to authorise aerial support to keep the fire at bay until ground crews and other resources can be dispatched. It is only when a Section 44 is declared more aerial support is readily available. By then it is often too late. This was clearly demonstrated in the Bees Nest Fire. A different funding model has to be found to ensure adequate resources can be dispatched in a timely manner - Regardless of land tenure or which agency is initially 'responsible' Wildfires have no regard for land tenure and firefighting funding should reflect this fact.

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1.2 Preparation and planning

- There were many examples of areas that had done hazard reduction burning but the fires still raced through and both houses and lives were lost. In extreme or catastrophic conditions,

unless you have permanent 'scorched earth' conditions over most of the land, hazard reduction makes very little difference to the intensity of the fires. The research and evidence clearly shows intensive hazard reduction, not necessarily burning, close to dwellings and communities has the most effect in reducing the intensity of fires and the impact of fires on built environment. The Government setting hazard reduction percentage quotas of land that must be burnt each year for land management agencies is not based on any science and is just not effective. While it is easy for bureaucrats to tick boxes and say 'it's done', it is definitely not the best way to get the desired outcome i.e. protect communities from fire and protecting and maintaining the Natural Environment

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1.3 Response to bushfires

1.4 Any other matters

- In 'normal' fire seasons rainforests usually do not burn. Fires stop at the edge, or only burn in a short distance. However this season, after extended dry periods, many rainforests did burn. Some didn't burn completely and slowed the rate of spread of the fires but much damage has been caused and these areas will probably never recover. Forest Corp places no value on rainforest and they are lowest on the list of RFS priorities. There was much media hype about saving the Wollemi Pines, however many equally environmentally important rainforest areas in the north coast burnt either from lack of resources or lack of interest in saving them. I totally understand the importance of saving lives and homes but much more emphasis needs to be placed on saving our important natural heritage areas.

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