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| Title | MR |
| First name | Philip |
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| I am making this submission as | Emergency services |
| 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>I am a fire fighter employed by the NPWS with over 30 years experience and operate in fire roles up to and including Divisional Commander.</p> <p>During the 2019/20 fire season I worked on the fires over a three month period starting at Glenn Innis in the north and working my way as far south as Eden.</p> <p>As with many firefighters I have never experienced the fire behaviour that was thrown at us during this period. For me personally my home was overrun by fire twice but fortunately due to good preparation and good fortune my home survived.</p> |
| 1.1 Causes and contributing factors | <p>In my opinion, the causes of these fires were ,the drought, the intense UV, the catastrophic fire day conditions, the changing climate, the dryness of fuels, the strong ,hot winds and low humidity. I witnessed fires burn through open paddocks with no grass ,through areas which had hazard reductions two years earlier, through areas where wildfire had passed only one year</p> |

previous and watched ancient Gondwana rainforest which has never burnt reduced to blacked debris. I saw houses burn in open paddocks with no fuel around them for hundreds of metres. Nothing could have changed the outcomes due to the dryness of the landscapes and the prevailing weather conditions.

1.2 Preparation and planning

It was my observation that being as prepared as possible, such as fuel reduction around buildings, fire sprinkler systems and geographical location of property and having a fire survival plan may have helped. However on many occasions it truly came down to temperature and wind conditions on the day. On those days no fire break seemed to hold and tactical backburning was successful only on milder days due to dryness of the landscape and lack of resources due to everyone being stretched to the maximum.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Considering the extreme conditions I believe all emergency services responded to the best of their ability and showed courage and a resilience beyond expectations. During road closures, such as when the Princes Hwy was suddenly closed, there was thousands of vehicles and people stranded by the sides of the roads sometimes for many hours, sometimes in extreme heat conditions. One recommendation I could make is that during these closures, if possible and safe that ambulances patrol the closed areas in case required for emergencies such as heat stress etc

1.4 Any other matters

It was my observation that controlling fires in land managed by Forest Corp was the most problematic. In backburning situations the amount of waste timber, windrowed debris, and bark [slash] created intense fire which was extremely problematic to control and mop up. On one occasion on the Muck Creek fire [Dorrigo area] we only did 100 metres of backburn in one day due to the fire intensity from these log dump sites requiring constant and aggressive mop up using much more human and water resources we could spare. Backburns in these areas went ballistic in nature creating super hot fires. At East Lynne fires that come out of recently logged compartments which had literally thousand of tons of fuel on the ground created super charged fire causing it, under the conditions on the day to travel through the adjacent Murramarang National Park with a ferocity so intense that it impacted the Park like a bomb had gone through it, burning through 8 kilometres of old growth forest in 15mins. In my opinion fires from State Forest land were the most intense and problematic.

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