



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Roy

Last name

Barlow

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A member of the general public

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

In the past the RFS have ignored fires that are no threat to human life or property. What I would suggest is that we have a task force on the ready 24/7. This task force will be manned with aircraft that can put out the fires before they spread and even start back burns from the air if required. Fires can be easily spotted by thermal satellite systems. 50% of fires are started by humans so there should be gaol sentences for offenders and the media and schools should be used to show the horror that can be caused by fire.

Too much emphasis has been put on the human aspect and often by the time the fire threatens, the front is far to long to handle. It should be law that every house close to the bush has to have fire fighting systems in place so that they don't risk their or other people's lives. This is the case for new houses in most bush municipalities but it should become retrospective. They

should be regularly tested and be self starting if the temperature reaches a critical temperature so that occupants don't have to be home.

If these systems were activated the RFS could be smaller and probably paid staff.

I was helping cleanup at a property in Bilpin and the locals are fuming about a backburn got out of control. They said it was performed at 10am on a hot windy day against the advice of the local RFS.

Attached is a newspaper article The village Voice, Interviewing the RFS. It shows how complicated it is to make a decision when a fire is happening.

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

50% of fires are started by humans so there should be gaol sentences for offenders and the media and schools should be used to show the horror that can be caused by fire.

1.2 Preparation and planning

We should have a task force on the ready 24/7. This task force will be manned with aircraft that can put out the fires before they spread and even start back burns from the air if required. Fires can be easily spotted by thermal satellite systems. I have been told that fires that are dealt with early have a much better chance of success.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Early intervention is paramount.

1.4 Any other matters

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Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- Manangement.docx
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Story by Dennis Limbert
Page 4, Issue 292 – 10 January 2020
The Village Voice Central West

LOCAL BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING IS IN GOOD HANDS

Like many people I have been watching the huge bushfires on the TV news, seeing the choking smoke fill the air at home, know local volunteers who have been fighting the fires and hearing of the devastation caused locally by the Gospers Mountain Megafire leading up to Christmas and over the New Year period. While watching yet another briefing by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons I started to wonder: how does this all work at a local level?

Waiting until the fires had died down somewhat, I put a call out to the Lithgow Fire Control Centre with a request for an interview. An appointment was made, and the team was very generous with their time explaining how it all worked in the background.

Bushfire management doesn't just happen; it's a carefully coordinated and organised ongoing process. It starts with the Bushfire Management Committee comprising combat agencies like the Rural Fire Service, Fire & Rescue, National Parks and State Forests. Other stakeholders on the committee include local government, aboriginal elders and representatives from the Manangaroo Army Depot and local collieries. A Risk Management Plan is developed and updated including the maintenance of fire trails, hazard reduction burns and funding for local bushfire lighting. When a fire breaks out an Incident Management Team and an Emergency Operations Centre are activated.

The Incident Management Team is tasked with fighting the fire. The Deputy Incident Controller coordinates the operation with the assistance of Operations, Planning, Logistics and Community Liaison officers. The Logistics Officer coordinates the movement of equipment and supplies as well as the feeding and accommodation of fire crews from out of the area while the Community Liaison Officer briefs the local community and media.

A key to coordinating the fighting of fires is the daily Incident Action Plan. This plan details the current situation across the fire area, the mission objective and the execution of firefighting and prevention tasks for that day. It is put together by the Planning Officer with the assistance of the Operations Officer using feedback and information provided out in the field by Divisional Commanders, Brigade Captains, Brigade Crews and other sources which is fed back to the Fire Control Centre for analysis by the Incident Management Team, the ten staff at the Centre and others. At 8am each morning the updated Incident Action Plan is passed onto the Divisional Commanders who disseminate this info to all Brigade Captains and the Brigade Crews. In that way all firefighters are working on the same page and the fire effectively managed.

Interestingly these are all roles not positions. That means that people who are trained in a role can be asked to fill that role. Considering the Fire Control Centre operates 24 hours in emergency having the roles manned by trained professionals, rather than the one individual, means that decisions and their implementation flow seamlessly from shift to shift. You will see

on TV that these roles are identified by the different coloured bibs that you see some fire fighters wearing.

Of course, it is very important to have a plan but conditions can change in an instant at the fire face. The experienced and passionate volunteer fire crew is the one that make immediate decisions to effectively light and manage bushfires in the field. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these volunteer men and women of the RFS who selflessly work to protect us all. Remember they are not paid for this.

The Emergency Operations Centre works collaboratively with the incident Management Team but have their own area of operations. This is made up of representatives from the Police, Department of Health, Department of Community Services, Roads and Maritime Services and Local Government and they are tasked with the important job of managing road closures, evacuation centres and assist members of the public who are affected by the fires.

We have also seen on the TV news how overseas firefighters have arrived on our shores to help fight the terrible bushfires. But when they come to Australia where do they end up and what do they do? It turns out that our very own Lithgow RPS Fire Control Centre has been hosting four overseas fire fighters, three from Canada and one from the US. I met up with two of the Canadians, Forrest from Alberta and Joe from Newfoundland.

Forrest works at the Alberta Department of Agriculture and Forestry and has been actively fighting fires for 22 years. Joe is also an experienced firefighter with 11 years' experience with the Newfoundland Department of Fisheries and Land Resources. Both Forrest and Joe responded to a call for volunteers that had been communicated by the Australian Government through Canadian Government channels. Apparently, the way the Australian, US and Canadian fire lighting systems are set up are quite similar and Forrest was able to slip into a Planning Officer role while Joe has been assisting as Logistics Officer.

While their families in Canada were enjoying a snowy white Christmas the overseas firefighters were working hard on a literally red-hot Christmas Day. Forrest told me that volunteers came in and fed them a Christmas lunch, adding that the volunteers and locals he has met have been phenomenal. Both Forrest and Joe arrived in Australia on December 21 and are due to leave for Canada in late January.

I am extremely grateful for the time given to me by the Deputy Incident Controller on the day Angela Lonergan and her mentor Tom Shirt. Angela and Tom praised the extreme dedication and hard work put in by volunteers from the RFS aided by crews from Fire 81 Rescue, National Parks, State Forests and the SES. Major Shane Doyle from Manangaroo Army Depot is thanked for accommodating up to 50 fire fighters, staging of fire lighting equipment and hosting the helicopter base. Doreen Peters and her team of volunteers were recognized as being crucial in catering for the fire fighters.

Angela added "Now is not the time to be complacent. The fire danger is far from over and crews are still working around the Capertee and Glen Davis areas. In addition, National Parks, State

Forests and other areas are still closed for a reason, including falling tree branches and a continuing fire danger.“

I believe we can be confident that the Chifley / Lithgow Fire Team, from the volunteer crews in our local brigades up to the Fire Control Centre, are coordinated, professional and dedicated to keeping our lives, our homes and our local environment safe. As locals let's show them our thanks and continued support through the rest of the fire season and beyond.