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| I am making this submission as | Resident |
| Submission type | Personal |

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| Organisation making the submission (if applicable) | |
| Your position in the organisation (if applicable) | |

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| Consent to make submission public | Public |
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| Your story | <p>The fire that hit me(13 November) jumped from another fire in Knorrit Forest, ran 8 km in two hours, hitting my hills behind at midnight. I phoned it in (no warnings), an RFS truck appeared, turned and ran. For two nights and a day I held 2km on my own, most stopped on my firebreaks and burn offs. My Two hills I burnt two years ago, despite threats by the RFS of arrest and suing if I lost control. 12 Houses around those hills survived (locals). I helped others in the Wherrol Flat area burn off, most of Wherrol Flat was unburnt. I had requested the RFS burn off 1000 acres to my south (private), that was 20 years unburnt, they ignored me- it went up like a bomb.</p> <p>I had years of paid summer firefighting with Forestry(ACT Forests, NZ and Wa Forests). We never used volunteers, just dealt with the fires immediately, no houses lost (or lives). Then Government sacked all of us- cost too much?</p> |
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Half my property was burnt by the main fire, I put it out ON MY OWN. Then the RFS shows up 33 hours late, bulldozers and burned half of what was left. The lines do not even protect my house, just follow lines on a map drawn because some idiots in Wingham were panicking. No back burn is done when the fire is out- but they did it? My unit is 400l tank and firefighting pump (as good as RFS dinky toy tanker)- yet I pay ESL for the crap RFS I got?

Insurance was held up 2 months while NRMA debated coverage of the unwarranted damage by RFS.

All the assistance I received was 20 bales of hay- LLS, and on bale donated. Then all shut down for Xmas new year, nothing since. I have off farm income, no support there.

Most houses burnt were surrounded by trees, not cleaned up, most competent locals put the fires out themselves.

I have been fixing 2km of fencing and hauling out trees bulldozed into my main creek by the RFS for two months now.

The main fire took 8 hours between my two hills, burn offs do work, it slowed the original fire, 1km went out on boundaries and fence lines without any suppression. Flame height to 1 foot, whereas the uphill "backburns" by the RFS were crown fires.

Main problem is no plant available, I have complete loss of any faith in RFS, and being declared a "necessary casualty" is offensive.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1. RFS threats when trying to burn off
2. RFS failure to protect public when notified of high risk areas
3. RFS management incompetence in suppression of fires, practice of long delays when notified, and practice of not attacking fires by suppression, but by huge "backburns", that usually spot and escalate into mega fires.
4. RFS lack of experience, deriding experienced professional firefighters of the past, replacing tried and successful practices with amateurish and absurd techniques
5. RFS acting to placate media without any reality checks, such as moving all assets to coast leaving my area unprotected

1.2 Preparation and planning

1. RFS to assist and encourage critical fuel reduction, especially in key areas that I tried to encourage, but was threatened and abused and stopped from doing, eg. 1000 acres to my South identified to RFS and not dealt with.
2. Provision of slip on units as in the ACT, to allow locals to support the RFS and suppress fires instantly, rather than wait for up to two hours for assets
3. Strategic firebreaks of key ridge areas by burnoff and firebreaks, to segment prone areas into manageable controllable sizes
4. Fast response assets to put out fires immediately.
5. Fire Towers to be re-instigated, Forestry assets to create paid professional units as in the past

1.3 Response to bushfires

1. Lightning strikes to be identified by technology available, follow up with spotter planes/ fire towers ASAP, then attack fires directly.
 2. Spacing units on high risk days to allow immediate response
 3. Immediate attack with water bombers is far more cost effective instead of waiting until fire is "upgraded".
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1.4 Any other matters

I worked in ACT Forests as a paid Summer Firefighter for years, NZFS and WA Forests. The ACT Bushfire Council funded Forestry to provide immediate response experienced firefighters, fire towers, heavy tankers(5000l), Bulldozers and graders. This worked well, until cost cutting dismantled the operation. The cost to the public was 100 times any money saved in 2003.

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