

Submission Number: NND.001.00800

Submission Of: Margaret Owen

Your Details

Email address:

Phone:

Preferred means of contact: Email

What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise?

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? Friends of Underwood Avenue Bushland/Friends of Landsdale Reserve

Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

The last fire in Underwood Avenue Bushland, Shenton Park, WA, Jan 11, 2014, on an extremely hot 40 degree day with a raging easter wind, was prevented from burning residential houses and Cancer Council buildings because helitankers dumped loads of lake water around the edges of the bushland.

The next morning the Cancer Council storage shed was ablaze.

Underwood Avenue Bushland is 34 ha of bushland that remains on the 64ha lot, that was endowed to the University of Western Australia in 1904. This is only about 6 kms from the city centre (Perth) and the bushland is a Bush Forever site that lies between Kings Park and Bold Park and is thus a critical part of the linkage from the Swan River to the Indian Ocean.

Underwood Bushland is threatened by commercial development by UWA. The draft report of the federal Dept of Environment Energy when the proposal was referred, was to 'not approve' because of threatened species and habitat but UWA withdrew that proposal by the next day.

UWA refuses to manage the bushland for weeds, and dry proliferating weeds like Veldt Grass are a terrible fire risk. The cause of the 2016 fire was a shortage of the powerlines that run through the bushland and the shortage - lightning ran down the power pole - and set alight the dry weeds at the base of the pole. Elements on other poles blew off and started fires up the hill. The whole bushland apart from the edges where water was dropped burnt severely. Insects in particular have not anywhere near recovered.

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

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In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

Maintaining firebreaks is the only activity the University (UWA) does. Even over 20 plus years of involvement in trying to save the bushland and in trying to have a genuine communication with the University, has not resulted in genuine liaison, and officers and Vice-Chancellors refuse to have the bushland managed.

Our group, The Friends of Underwood Avenue Bushland, did one session of guerilla weeding and our 24 bags of weeds cost \$60 to be taken by the recycling place. Our offer to UWA to work together with the community to control weeds was ignored. To date, we have been unable to continue due to social distancing requirements.

I think that the UWA and state government's Fire Management Plan for Underwood Bushland, required when uWA was granted state government approval for a housing development, is different from the local Fire Department's plan.

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?

* We do not support the annual prescribed burning target of the SW forests where a target of 'x' hectares is prescribed to be burnt by the Dept of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

*Landsdale Reserve City of Wanneroo. The City of Wanneroo is around 20 kms north of Perth and is therefore not within the Perth Central planning sub-region as outlined in Dr Buti's report (Bushfire Reform Package) to the state government. The City of Wanneroo has some amazing bushland. Landsdale and some other areas are Threatened Ecological Communities - 'Banksia attenuata woodlands with species rich understory'. Thirty years ago, the Friends of Landsdale Reserve saved this 16ha bushland from being cleared and have managed the bushland with the City of Wanneroo by weeding by hand. Landsdale was in almost pristine condition. However, the City's Bushfire Risk Management (supposedly an independent office within Department of Fire and Emergency Services) has allowed the City to access mitigation activity funds. Without consultation, a firebreak was cleared right through the middle of Landsdale Reserve and about one third was burnt by a prescribed burning company. The following year another third was burnt. 20 other areas are now being burnt on a rotation of 6 years. The rest of Landsdale Reserve is expected to be burnt this year. These prescribed burns have wrecked the bushland. Some plants that regenerate by seed have a long juvenile period (much longer than 6 years). For example: the juvenile period for *Petrophile macrostachya* is 60 months, 'therefore a minimum inter-fire interval of ten years, and up to 20 years would be recommended for occurrences that contain this species.' Many species are killed by fire.

Other plants unlikely to survive fire, *Eremaea pauciflora*, *Patersonia occidentalis* and *Gompholobium tomentosum*, have juvenile periods of 48, 36 and 31 months respectively. *Banksia attenuata* and *Eucalyptus marginata* (Jarrah) both have juvenile periods of 48 months. This means that the bushland needs at least a 20-40 year fire interval.

Landsdale Reserve is fenced, there is no rubbish dumping or off-road vehicle use and virtually no weeds so the risk of fire was low.

If there were to be a fire, we would advocate rapid response. The Friends are very sad at the degradation caused by the City to a vegetation community that is threatened with extinction and to the creatures that inhabit or rely on the bushland. As well, after so many years of working with the City of Wanneroo in caring for the bushland, we were sad to discover by accident, the City's planned burning regime.

Do you agree to your submission being published? Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name

