

**Submission Number: NND.001.01004**

**Submission Of:**

**Your Details**

Email address:

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Preferred means of contact: Email

What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my personal situation

What was your personal situation in relation to the 2019-20 Bushfires?

Where do you live? Bega Valley (A)

**Your Submission**

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

A person from the RFS came to our place 12 hours prior to the fire going through our farm (about 2pm on the 30/12/2019) to confirm that we were aware of the situation.

He looked at our setup and confirmed that we should be able to defend our house.

Also, after we called triple zero, the RFS truck came to our place in 30 minutes (at about 1am on the 31/12/2020).

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

Unfortunately, the fire truck came to our place with very little water, they needed to connect to our water tanks, but they did not have the correct connector. We have joined tanks with only one outlet.

At that stage our firehose was connected to that outlet, as we have been watering our homestead and animals whole day in preparation to the fire. We were planning to continue firefighting. We were expecting that the fire brigade would have their own water supply and they would just help us to fight the fires.

After [REDACTED] (my husband) found the correct connector for the RFS's hose amongst his fire fighting gear, we swapped hoses. It was about 2 am by then, the fire was coming over the hills and we could feel the fire storm approaching very fast.

The RFS team strongly advised us to evacuate before it was too late, we hesitated a little as we were worried about our animals, but since our hose was disconnected and we were not able to be productive in fighting the fire, we cut the fences and evacuated.

We stopped at Cobargo Fire Station to mark our names off and to decide which direction to evacuate.

In about 30 min the RFS team that was at our property also stopped at the same Cobargo Fire Station. They told us that the fire turned South of our property and they needed to rush to Quaama to stop the fire getting to the Eastern side of Princess Highway.

[REDACTED] asked the team if they thought we could return to our property and they said that we could. We were very puzzled since the fire was not under control and the winds were unbelievable strong. We followed our 'gut feeling' and evacuated to Bermagui. In about 3 hours we saw on the Fires Near Me sight that the fire went through our property. The fire was travelling really fast: it reached the outskirts of Bermagui, which is 30 km away in few hours. The town of Bermagui was flooded with evacuees from the surrounding areas and had difficulties in coping with that amount of people. Since the fires were surrounding the town, the air quality deteriorated very quickly : it was almost impossible to breath even on the edge of the ocean.

The road back to Cobargo was opened on the 1st of January for people to check on their properties. We did and we discovered that our house and most infrastructure were destroyed completely. We had about 50 cattle, one alpaca and all chickens died in the fire. We lost 20 more cattle and 7 alpacas later due to severe burns. Our cows kept giving births to calves, but were unable to feed them because their utters were burnt severely. Since all our fences were destroyed by fire and we were not able to catch the newborn calves to bottle-feed them, we had no choice but witness them dying slowly through the months of January and February.

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

We think all the RFS teams need to come with their water supply to properties as there is no guarantee that a connection to an alternative water supply on a rural property can be established promptly.

We do believe that the funds need to be allocated to train the property owners how to prepare their properties for the fires.

We have a wonderful, very active RFS in Cobargo area, but the force and extend of the fire were much greater than any experienced firefighter ever witnessed and we are worried that the fires like this will occur more often, so we do need to improve our response to danger.

We believe that we need many more, well trained and much better equipped and protected fire fighting teams. i

We do believe that the reason for the ferocity and the extend of the recent fires is the climate change and we do need to create effective policies to mitigate the problem.

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

After the fires the response of the community and the charity organizations were amazing.

Despite of negative media reports, we found that the Red Cross has been an outstanding supporter to the fire victims.

We do believe that the government should be much more proactive in supporting the citizens and businesses in situations like this.

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