

Submission Number: NND.001.01083

Submission Of:

Your Details

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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? Goulburn Mulwaree (A)

Your Submission

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

Protection of individual properties and installation of fire trails and breaks. The local brigades worked tirelessly in protecting the area.

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

Communication with the locals about planned activities was poorly communicated and often only communicated on Facebook. In one instance the regional RFS made a decision to put incendiaries into the National Park behind our property and we were not informed prior to this action. The local brigade had put a notice on Facebook about a "BBQ and information session" on Australia Day. My husband was phoned about helping out at the BBQ but, even knowing that our property backs onto the National Park and was probably the closest property to the incendiary drop, nothing was mentioned about the planned back-burning exercise. Another member of the brigade whose property also backs onto the area was not even asked to the BBQ let alone informed of the planned incendiary drop. There needs was no consultation or even information provided before the back-burn took place, the community information session occurred after the back-burn had already begun. This caused an enormous amount of anxiety to many people in the community when we suddenly saw massive clouds of smoke billowing out of the gorge in an area that had seemed to be slowly burning out over a period of three or four weeks and was not perceived as a threat at that stage. The threat level to our property escalated enormously at this point and I was forced to move livestock once again in a rushed and anxious state. Our road was closed to non-residents as the RFS felt that the threat level was unacceptable.

This burn (in the areas of Long Point Lookout and Badgery's Lookout) took place in a week where temperatures were predicted to be in the 40's for a number of days, hardly ideal conditions for a "controlled" burn, in an area that is accessible only to helicopters. The burn appears to have achieved nothing other than to destroy more habitat and cause unnecessary anxiety. The hillsides which were burned are very steep and are above the Shoalhaven River so the ash created would have run straight into the river when the rains came shortly after this time. This area is also known koala habitat and with the enormous damage caused to the koala population over the summer I would have thought it wise to leave as much habitat undamaged as possible.

Another issue which I would like to mention is the lax attitude of the local police in evacuating residents. They came up our road a couple of times and told neighbours to be prepared to evacuate but they never came to our house.

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 need more air support for fire-fighters. Many areas affected are only accessible by air.

We need to try to protect habitat for wildlife, not just homes. Our animals are unique and are already vulnerable due to habitat loss, we should have done more earlier on to protect their homes!

We need to pay professional fire-fighters to fight bushfires and we need to equip them all to the highest possible standard available. Or, if we are going to rely on the generosity and community spirit of people to protect the lives and property of others in the community then we need to make sure they have their best protection available. They should be equipped as well as the paid fire fighters.

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

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