

**Submission Number: NND.001.01102**

**Submission Of: Kimlyn Bruce TEMPLETON**

### Your Details

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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? I am a trained NSW RFS crew leader and have spent over 20 days fighting fires this season, on 1st February 2020 I stayed at home and successfully defended my home but did suffer fire damage to 503 of my 504 acres.

Where do you live? Snowy Monaro Regional (A)

### Your Submission

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

Re "where do I live" your drop down box for Snowy Monaro did not give adequate choice and supports my belief that the Cooma fire control centre has still not realised that the northern section of their area had a major fire on 1st February 2020... their IAP (Incident Action Plan) for 1st Feb 2020 did not identify any assets west of the Murrumbidgee River in the Bumbalong Valley, even though there were 17 residences!!! Now only 12... Might explain where the RFS were not.

Now, back to the leading question, what worked well...Bugger all. Local RFS leaders can handle a little grass fire, but when their own homes were threatened they did not adequately hand over fire control of their area. Some actually were classified rather sarcastically as "missing in action" due to their absence from where the danger was most obvious.

They concentrated on defending the better class of home even if it was unoccupied, whilst less glamorous homes were being actively defended and calling for assistance. They set themselves to deny the fire crossing to the east of the Monaro Highway and refused to attack spot fires west of the Monaro Highway that were threatening occupied homes.

The available crew leaders suddenly appeared to stop thinking about what they would have done if they had been in normal clothes in their ute with a water tank on the back, instead because they were in yellows in a big red truck they now followed rather blindly the instructions they were getting over the radio from a person in Cooma or Sydney who was ignorant of what was happening locally in full view of the tanker crew. Perhaps surrendering to the "higher authority" is a coward's way of excusing themselves because they had become mentally "missing in action".

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

Personal visits to properties by inexperienced RFS people who simply scared residents into evacuating rather than defending. All of our homes that were defended were saved. My wife and I are trained firefighters, we had prepared our property... yet [REDACTED] was told two days before the fire arrived that she should "evacuate or die". We stayed, defended, and saved everything.

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

Imitate at all levels what should occur at the house holder level, and simply upscale the preparations. We had a house hold plan which we enacted and saved our house, we had a neighbourhood plan which we enacted and saved all houses that were actively defended, but our Brigade had no plan other than to "react as the fire happens" but they were unable to react to our calls about spot fires, our fire control centre was completely absent as we have been advised that they had a communications problem which they have been unwilling to expand upon or inform us.

The metropolitan strike team in our area had no UHF radios and hence could not communicate with local properties or some RFS tankers.

The NSW RFS appears to be more interested in fighting fires than training residents to avoid fires and to prepare themselves for fires. The NSW RFS keep saying "do not expect a tanker" but did bugger all to help residents to learn how to defend themselves against fire.

Persons wishing to purchase a country block of land should be obliged to complete a course of training/instruction on how to defend themselves.

Insurance companies should take more care in deciding which properties they will insure and be allowed to scale their premiums based on the preparedness of the property and residents AND NOT RELY ON POSTCODE to determine premiums. Why should my premium go up because my useless neighbours failed to protect their property?

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

Yes, the structure of the NSW RFS is an historical model that is now obsolete, relying on a willing few to defend the oblivious many, relying on the volunteers to raise money for extra equipment and PPE, relying on leaders elected based on inherited or inferred authority with little or no real professional guidance or leadership skills.

Perhaps the NSW RFS should look at the Army Reserve model of full timers providing "professional" guidance for "amateur" volunteer units, fully funded by government, with those in leadership roles stress tested to ensure they can handle their leadership role. If no local leader available then merge brigades... the lack of adequate local leadership appears to be a recurring theme when we go to fires and mix with other

brigade crews...many studies show that the worst possible combination is a poor leader leading a poor unit.

My experience is that too many leading the RFS like to fight fires, whereas I fight fires as a necessary part of living in my little bit of heaven.

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