

2019 Bushfire - Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Submission By:

Full Name

[REDACTED]

Preferred Contact, either:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(5) My submission will provide respective experiences and background from my own personal situation (**option 1**), also provide input and comment based on my professional knowledge, qualification or experience (**option 2**)

Option 1:

I live in an area affected by bushfires and I received 3 evacuation messages and 1 too late to leave take shelter now message. I suffered personal and financial loss. I assisted the emergency response in my area as a community support volunteer, also as a property owner, and person responsible for the management of neighboring properties in absence of the property owners and with their authorisation to act on their behalf.

My local Government Area: Hawkesbury NSW

[REDACTED]

Post Code: 2756

2019 Bushfire RFS Reference Name: Gosper Mountain Fire

Option 2:

Based on my knowledge and experience of 54 years of life, living on the land, Australian Natural Bushland at [REDACTED] on a [REDACTED] property, is my qualification. My knowledge and experience in this submission will cover my "hands on" qualifications and experience, knowledge taught to me by my father, [REDACTED] who shared with me his knowledge and skills from the age of 5yrs onwards while assisting him on our lands in the areas of Environment, Land Management, Land Use, Planning, Building Standards, Wildlife Conservation, Traditional Fire Management Practices of Indigenous Australians, Community Welfare, Emergency Response and Management.

My Upbringing, Family Background and a bit of Bushfire mitigation and Land Management History:

My father was [REDACTED] Australian Forestry. I was taught my whole life from him about Forestry, Conservation and Sustainability, Environment, Land Management, Traditional Fire Management which is the Practices of Indigenous Australians fire management, passed onto pastoralist and bush people by our Indigenous people, my father taught me this, along with Wildlife Conservation, as the two things are part of each other. Living on a thousand acres in the bush, My father also taught me and my brothers Emergency Response and Management. Both my mother and father taught me Community Welfare, the welfare of others in my community. I was raised with

these things my whole life. My father was also a builder by trade and a plumber by trade. My father built the first hospital in Bangladesh, Joyramkura Christian Hospital for the Australian Baptist Missionary Society, this was prior to myself and my brothers being born. So he also taught me Planning and Building Standards, and Land Use, Both Farming and Building. Our family was the largest land owner in the [REDACTED] Region, we were also one of the largest property holders in the Hawkesbury Region. My 3 brothers and I grew up and lived on our main holding, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] encompassed by Comleroy State Forest on the Western, Northern and Eastern sides.

As a family unit, we all worked together in managing all our land holdings. As well as the main property, we also owned a large quantity of land at [REDACTED] [REDACTED], we had plantation forest, and farmed Murray Grey beef cattle, watermelons, pumpkins and citrus, oranges and mandarins'.

From the age of 5yrs old my brothers and I were expected to help my mother and father with all property work, also with the winter cold months "annual hazard reduction burning" (mitigation) of our properties. This was done "annually" throughout winter by ALL property owners across the entire [REDACTED] Region. This was done to reduce forest fuel loads to minimize the impacts of wildfires in the summer months. We would light the bases of our mountains every year or 2, sparing the valley floors for stock to graze and wildlife to feed.

Because this Mitigation, Cold Month Hazard Reduction was done "Annually", There was not the intensity of the forest floor fuel loads that there are there today. It would take 2 days for a fire to go from the bottom of a mountain to the top of the mountain.

As a young kid, I loved to watch the fires at night in Winter off the verandah. The sweet smell of burning gum leaf, not the toxic, choking carcinogenic smoke of today's caused by built up fuel loads. I would watch trickling fire lines of fire working its way slowly up the mountains through the cliff crevasses, moving so slowly that that all wildlife including a cockroach could get out of the way. It was like watching flickering candles burning, actually very beautiful to watch, relaxing and calming. These fires and this type of hazard reduction burning never made it to the tree tops. Because we did it Annually, at the right time, there were no large forest floor fuel loads. It was lucky to ever be a foot or 2 foot height, most of the time just a trickling little fire.

My father would say, if the dew overnight put it out then it meant that the bushfire fuel loads weren't there, and if it flared up again the next day in the warmth of the day, then it meant the fuel loads were there. To me as a child, that was pretty simple to understand.

Annual hazard cold month reduction, does not prevent bushfires. Summer wildfires can still happen, especially due to lightning strike with summer storms. But wildfires back then because of annual mitigation meant we could manage, contain and put out these fires. In short, wildfires could be managed.

Unlike the inferno's of today, 2019/2020 wildfires is a good example, even with the best intentions, and one of the best funded and well resourced RFS you could ever have, plus the added supporting aerial support of today. These are Wildfires that cannot be managed, why? Because forest floor fuel load build ups are allowed, and encouraged by our Government and Government departments, up to 20yrs or even more forest fuel load build ups. Ever single previous Bushfire Royal Commission or

Commission of enquiry has concluded the exact same thing "LACK OF HAZARD REDUCTION". It is not as if Governments have not been told, they have, over and over again. Yet Still nothing is changed.

So Why and When did Bushfire Land Management (mitigation) practices change ? Especially if what was done previously worked, and worked very well, it did in my Region, I know that as fact.

Enter the birth of the EPA in Australia, first established in Victoria in 1971. The EPA was just an association, an city suburban environmentalist naturalist movement. You must consider and reflect on that period in history. The Vietnam war, freedom, peace, hippies, free love, drugs, mung-beans Woodstock, etc. The "suburban" city dwelling environmentalist hippies were attracted to thi naturalist movement, many nudist colonies popped up through this period. We all know what Nimbin was and where it was. This movement grew n numbers especially nearing the end of the Vietnam war. Even our Vietnam Veterans were not celebrated, but spat on instead by the EPA movement. The peace loving Hippies or "greenies" as they were known then, not to be confused with the Greens Political Party, of which came later in the mid 80's.

NSW Labor candidate Neville Wran tapped into this "greenie/hippy" EPA movement. He need the environmentalist vote if he was going to win the 1976 NSW state election. The EPA movement vote saw Labor and Neville Wran gain power in the 1976 NSW State elections. The payoff for "greenie, EPA movement support, was the EP&A Act being legislated by Neville Wran in 1979, then followed the changes to NSW SEPP (*state environmental protection policies*), and funding into the NPWS of which the EPA movement had infiltrated and gained a strong foothold in. EP & A Act. 1979 policies were implemented into the Land Management of NPWS and later into State Forest Land Management.

In 1982 NPWS officers came and saw my father. They told my father, that if any of our bushfire mitigation burns on our lands exceeded our boundaries and went into NPWS and/or State Forest lands, my father would be given a 50 thousand dollar fine. We lived on a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] sharing boundaries on 3 sides with Comleroy State Forest. Our Land was embedded into Comleroy State Forest. The back parts of our lands that butted to Comleroy SF were inaccessible by vehicle. So my father, on things he could not guarantee from happening, not wanting to risk a huge fine, if it ever did exceed our land boundaries, stopped Hazard Reducing our [REDACTED] property. We started to just hazard reduce around our buildings and property assets. This meant that a large proportion, the majority of our own lands in fact, were no longer being managed for the purpose of bushfire mitigation. Due to NPWS, State Forest and their "new" EP & A Act 1979 Policies.

In late 1997 the same year that the NSW Rural Fires Act was legislated by Bob Carr, a summer electrical storm had started 19 fires from lightning strike in the Comleroy State Forest. NSW State Forest contacted my Father, they wanted to come into our lands and light the bases of our mountains, to back-burn into these lighting strike fire in their lands, to try and contain it. There was no road access to back parts of our lands, and no access into that area of Comleroy State Forest, where these 19 fires were located. So basically, they wanted to came into our lands to do what we had always done with managing our lands previously, my whole life, up until 1979 the EP & A Act and their threat of a 50 thousand dollar fine to my father... wow, I wondered at the time, if my father could hit them with a 50 Thousand dollar fine for them exceeding their boundaries into our lands. None the less, my father allowed State Forests to come onto our lands to do this. I personally witnesses our mountains being burnt for the State Forest fire containment. There was a HUGE

difference in the fire behavior of these mountains in comparison of what I use to witness as described above. I was on an opposite mountain at the time, about 250 metres away with clear view. Our lands, these mountains had not been burnt since 1982 and the NPWS Officer who had come. Forest Floor Fuel Load Build ups were now (1997) at 15 years.

I watching from the opposite mountain when State Forest lit it up, watching from the place that I use to watch our slow trickily burns as a kid. They did this back-burn at Night time about 8pm. The fire went from the bottom of the mountain, to the top of the mountain in 10 minutes. Flames went up 120 foot tall gum trees and the heads of the trees just absolutely exploded into flames, nothing left of the heads of the trees at all. The fire was that ferocious and intense, the radiated heat on the opposite mountain where I was, I had to take off my Sloppy-joe and went down to a Singlet-top. That's how much radiated heat there was. This was no small back-burn, all 10 of our mountains, a thousand acres were lit to contain the 19 NPWS/Comleroy State Forest fires. No animal, no possum or koala would even have even had a chance to escape this. I was absolutely mortified to see the difference between burning every 1 to 2 years, compared to 15 years worth of growth.

For the next 3 week, all I did was cry, and shoot maimed severely burnt and injured wildlife that has survive this SF Back-Burn fire, they were so badly burnt and injured. It was horrific.

I remember crying, and being so angry, yelling at my father that there was nothing Green or environmental about this. It took over 2 years for the bush to recover.

I have argued and stated to my Local RFS, Hawkesbury Council, my NSW State & Federal MP's for now 23 years, that these mitigation and land management policies are WRONG ! Constantly falling on deaf ears. I'm just a women, where are my qualifications, why should they listen. That's about their views, what would I know. They would rather listen and set policies by listening to a "City" suburban environmental activist, or off a 20 year olds university thesis. None of them live in the bush, none of them have decades of hands on experience and knowledge, but that's who our bureaucrats and Government elect choose to listen to, not the people from the land.

In the late 90's NPWS put the Wollemi NP up for World Heritage Listing. At that time, as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Colo River Valley Tourism Association I lodged a public submission. At the time I supported the WH Listing as Colo Tourism was based fundamentally on Eco-Tourism, however within the Land Management plan they would be changing the NPWS bushfire management policies. From memory, changing 1 in 10 year burns to 1 in 25 years, and 1 in 15 year burns to 1 in 50 year burns. There would be a 2km buffer area on the fringes of the parks that would be maintained by 2 year burns. I actually wrote a submission against these changes at the time it, because of what I had witnessed on our private lands in 1997. The policies restricting and hindering mitigation and hazard reduction land management, have only ever increased ever since. Since the World Heritage listing of Wollemi NP (2000), I can personally state, that NONE of the bushfire management plan has been implemented, including the buffer-zones on the fridges adjoining private lands.

With constant new policies making it even harder for land and property owners to maintain and manage their owns lands, plus the NPWS, EPA, Bureaucrat's & Government Departments, mismanagement of public lands, in turn only threatens peoples' lives, properties and homes. It also hardly protects wildlife or the environment.

Everyone has just witnessed and experienced now in 2019/2020, what I did on private lands 23yrs ago in 1997. The bottom line is, the EPA, NPWS, The NSW Department of Planning and Environment

Bureaucrat's, Politicians, Planning Ministers and those in Parliament, either don't know enough to get that the policies are very clearly WRONG, or.... THEY JUST DON'T CARE.

Environment and Land Management

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons did a fantastic job after the death of his Step father in 2000, seeking and receiving the RFS State funding into what is now a well funded and well resourced volunteer emergency service unit. However, what he didn't do, was change the land management policies that attributed to his step father's death. The same EPA, NPWS and EP & A Act 1979 policies that have allowed the forest fuel load build ups in our National Parks & State Forests for 40 yrs, the same policies that have fuelled these 2019/2020 fires. NSW Regional Land Management Policies (public & private land) are currently being circulated via our NSW Councils right now of which will be in place to 2040 ! Coincidentally rolled out for public submission while we were all distracted fighting inferno's.

Planning Priority 13 in my regions State Regional Draft LSPS document stated - "NPWS & State Forests are to remain in their Natural Condition", of which essential means, No mitigation and No Hazard reduction, for another 20 years. NPWS claims and wingers, that they have had a reduction in funding buy Government. Why would funding be required for NPWS & State Forest when policies state no Land Management is required, that is what "to be left in their natural conditions" means. These Regional State Land Management "Draft LSPS" plans will be in place to 2040, for the next 20 years. These Land Management Plans (*covering all public & private lands*), and will be the over-arching document to "all other" local council land management policies, of which all those plans and policies will have to be amended to reflect the State Regional Draft LSPS 2040.

Now Where do you all think the NSW RFS PBP 2006 policy has come from ? Mars? Where do you think all the new policies for HR's and Land management of private lands has come from ? Mars ? Or would it be the via the NSW EPA and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, who administer the EP & A Act.

It is the RFS Commissioner who oversees the NSW Rural Fires Act 1997 Policies, RFS policies of which the EP & A Act 1979 Land Management and Planning policies have been implemented into. Also Not to mention the EPA Clean Air Act policies. Of which these policies also hinder or prevent private property owners in their own land management and hazard reduction.

The NSW Dept of Planning and Environment administer the EP & A Act 1979, all overseen and signed off on by the NSW Planning Minister. 40 yrs of poor and clearly wrong policies for managing the Australian Bush, and they want to continue on with these exact same policies for another 20years. The RFS Commissioner has not fought very hard to change these EP&A policies! Why is that ? Shane Fitzsimons after the death of his step father, a NPWS worker was killed in the Kuringai Fires. Shane did well to address inadequate resources and equipment contributed to the deaths, and fixing that problem for all brigades and RFS volunteers, credit where credit is due. However as outlined in this Sydney Morning Herald article link and the coroners own finding, of which is stated in the smh article, also attributed, a LACK of Hazard Reduction. Shane Fitzsimons as the NSW RFS Commissioner did NOT address that issue. instead he allowed the adoption of EP & A Act policies into the Rural Fires Act 1997. Was this the payoff for the resource and equipment funding he obtained for the NSW RFS Service, or was this influenced by his upbringing by a NPWS worker strongly influenced by EPA ideology. Of which we clearly know from every single inquest held in this country to be WRONG.

As Much as Shane Fitzsimons feels that "All Volunteers have a right to go home", EQUALLY, All Australians have the right to be safe on their own lands, and in their own homes.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/parks-service-to-face-court-over-burn-off-deaths-20021227-gdg0vi.html>

Land Use

Under My Properties 149 Certificate, my bushfire rating is listed as "Minor". Hawkesbury Council, now rates my property and the [REDACTED] Region as "High". What brought that about?

Don't you think it strange that pre the EP & A Act 1979, and pre the NSW Rural Fires Act. 1997 being legislated the bushfire rating in the [REDACTED] Region was in FACT "**Minor**", but after these 2 legislation being implemented in NSW, my Council because of State Land Management mitigation policies, not to mention the EP & A "Clean Air Act. now states the [REDACTED] Region as "High".

Our "entire" country is in FACT "Bushfire prone lands" always has been. Fire has always been part of the Australian Landscape, nothing will changes this, many of our flora species require fire to germinate, this is a fact.

The [REDACTED] and ALL other regions are part of this same Australian landscape. In my 5 decades the ONLY thing that has changed, is NOT people living in the bush, this has always been part of our history and landscape as well. The ONLY CHANGE has been in how we Land Manage with Hazard reduction and best practice Mitigation. And it is The EPA and the EP & A Act 1979 THAT HAS CHANGED THIS.

New EP & A Act 1979 policies were implemented first off into SEPP Policies, at the same time implemented into the NPWS & State Forest Land Management Policies. Then into water policies, air policies etc... there is NO Government Department where EP & A Act policies have not been implemented.

Even when the NSW Rural Fires Act was legislated in 1997, via the EP & A Act, policies were even implemented into the Rural Fires Act and its policies. Of which govern either Hazard Reduction, Land Clearing and Mitigation. Or should I say "preventing" and/or "hindering" best land practices and bushfire mitigation. The Rural Fires Act 1997, not only applies to ALL Public non NPWS and State Forest Lands, but now ALSO applies to ALL Private Lands.

So I'll explain my 2019 Bushfire Situation - No Hazard reduction burning and mitigation in Comleroy State Forest since the 2001 Wildfires.

Restricted by RFS Policy, 7 to 10 Yrs for ground burns on "private" lands.

So, "Government" via the EP & A Act 1979, Land Management practices for NPWS and State Forest (*which state leave in their natural condition*) Puts 20 years of bushfire fuel loads directly on the west, north and eastern sides of my property.

NSW RFS Policy then puts 10 years of bushfire fuel loads on mine own land, and my neighboring properties, right to my house front door. Other than then 10/50 policies, that allow me to clear back "10 METRES" from my house... mmm So "Government" via policy, places me in this inferno situation, then expects me to save my home and property ? Really ?

The NSW Dept of Planning and Environment administer the EP & A Act 1979, all overseen and signed off on by the NSW Planning Minister. Both Liberal & Labor Planning Ministers have signed off on clearly wrong policies for managing the Australian Bush for the past 40 years, ever since the EP & A Act 1979 was legislated.

For the [REDACTED] Hawkesbury Region -

1994 Wildfires (15 years of forest floor fuel load build ups after the EP & A Act 1979 policies were implemented into the NP & State Forests .

2001 Wildfires (7 years of forest floor fuel load build ups after the EP & A Act 1979, coupled with 3yrs worth of Private Property Fuel Load build ups after the Rural Fires Act 1997 came along, houses lost in this wildfire at Blaxlands Ridge NSW

2013 Wildfires (19 years of forest floor fuel load build ups after the EP & A Act 1979, coupled with 16yrs worth of Private property Fuel Load build ups after the Rural Fires Act 1997 came along. This fire did not affect the COLO Region, It was to the west, and wiped out Lithgow and Bilpin.

2019 Wildfires - For the COLO Region, again, 20 years of forest Fuel Load Build Ups, Coupled with 20yrs of Private Property Fuel Load Build Ups, with even more EP & A Act 1979 policies being further implemented into Land Use and Land Management Public & Private Lands over that 20yr period.

What really did you expect the outcome to be ? Seriously ?

COLO HEIGHTS - Major Property Loss

BILPIN - Major Property Losses *Note, some areas in BILPIN, only had 7yrs of Fuel Load Build Ups due to the Lithgow State Mine fire of 2013.

I would say it is very clearly evident that even 7 years of Forest Floor Fuel Load Build Ups is a problem, let alone 10, 15, 20 years or more. I would say the evidence PROVES without a doubt that these EP & A Act 1979 land management policies are very clearly WRONG for Land Management of the Australian Bush.

Most if not ALL of the current EP & A Act land management policies being implemented are also being driven by UNESCO Policies. These are the policies of foreign nations, that may work for those nations, but are clearly WRONG for the Australian Bush. Under our Constitution, it is against the law for foreign nations to influence our Australian politics. I question then, How UNESCO policies, policies of foreign nations are being implemented into our State Land Management Policies via NSW State Government and our Councils. According to our Constitution, from my understanding, this is in fact Treason.

It's ok to say that we gave 40 years ago the EPA and its ideas of environmental management a go. But if evidence and history proves these EPA environmental Land Management ideas are Wrong, for the Australian Bush, then equally, it is OK to go back to the practices that worked, and worked well, pre the EP & A Act 1979 legislation.

The policies created under this legislation need to be abolished, maybe even the legislation itself needs to be abolished. At the very least ALL Policies created under the legislation need to be re looked at, and re assessed.

Planning and Building Standards

Councils & RFS Building and Planning Policies - I have a whole story to tell on this topic, my own personal experience.

I went into these 2019/2020 uninsured as a Direct Result of Hawkesbury Council and RFS Planning Policies.

I'm happy to elaborate on this further. Please feel free to contact me if wishing to know more.

Climate Change

A "Climate Change Activist" once explained to me what "Climate Change" meant. The wording and the intended interpretation of what "Climate Change" in fact was.

Quote - "It has nothing to do with weather, It is the change in climate, concerning long term trends over broad areas caused by man."

Ok, So when I take this "quote" on what "Climate Changes" is... and then relate that to the 2019/2020 Australian Bushfires. In that context... then I would have to agree that the 2019/20 Bushfires were due to "Climate Change". But NOT in the context of weather.

Droughts, Floods, Fire, Wind, Storms are all part of Australia's natural weather, cycles and patterns. Given I have lived 5 decades in the same region, personally I can state that over the past 50 years, the weather and the weather cycles have NOT CHANGED at all in my lifetime in the [REDACTED] Region.

So, if your referring to how the climate has changed concerning the long term trends over broad areas caused by man, Then we are talking about the "changes created" by man regarding the Australian bushfire & mitigation land management practices, of which changed since the EP & A Act was legislated 1979, resulting in a catastrophic bushfire event, one of many due to these changes over the past 40yrs.

A "Climate of which had been Changed", concerning long term changes over broad areas caused by man" The Activists very point. Of which is My very point as well, and the points that have been made here in my submission. And we need to take action concerning these man created changes that changed this climate.

The people responsible then, would be the relevant Government Depts and bureaucrats. ALL should be held accountable and responsible for the climate THEY changed resulting in a catastrophic bushfire event, taking life and property. Not to mention the major wildlife loss and devastating environmental damage.

They and we should also - "Commit to Action to Change the Policies that have created the Australian Bush Climate to Change of which Fuelled these 2019/2020 bushfires.

Well, that is the very point. We need to Get back to Traditional Land Management Practices. ALL those affected regarding property loss should also, take Civil Action against all those responsible. Starting with the EPA, NPWS, State Forests, the NSW DoPE who administer the EP & A Act 1979, The NSW RFS who administer the Rural Fires Act 1997, and All State Planning Ministers who have signed off on these policies for the past 40 yrs. They are the very people who have clearly "Changed the Climate" by long term trends via poor and clearly wrong Policy making, and Implementation of these policies into the Australian Land Management practice, Changing the Australian Bush Climate and Landscape.

Wildlife and Native Flora Conservation

The current environmental management is WRONG WRONG WRONG !

Our Native Wildlife & Flora is NOT being protected by Current management practices, clearly evident by the wildlife loss and environmental destruction, you have all just witnessed in the 2019/2020 fires.

What is inexcusable is the FACT that our Governments and Government Departments already knew the environmental impacts that these types of manmade inferno's have, including the EPA & NPWS What makes it even more inexcusable this time around, is that these fires started in the spring breeding period. Not only were the older animals killed, but with spring breed, the next generation was eradicated also.

I am so sick and tired of the emphasis made regarding the Koala. COLO, pronounced in indigenous language as "Culoul" mean Koala. The COLO region is home to the Koala. If fire is reaching the tops

of the trees where Koalas live, and they are being killed, then everything in the under-stories are gone.

No Wedge-Tail Eagle baby made it out of the nest, the same with many other birds, and all other native species. Wallaby's and Roos, are known to throw their young from their pouches when in threat "fright & flight".

In 1994 wildfires I did not witness wildlife impact. In 1997, on private lands as described above, personally witnessed with profound impacts on me personally. In 2001 wildfires, I watch in daylight hours hundreds of animals running across the valley floors 3 days ahead of the fire front. In 2019. I saw NO ANIMALS, other than 2 deer, one with an injured leg. In wildfire events, it is very very strange not to see wildlife in "flight" mode.

Buy my own knowledge and experience, I know very well what has happen, and I knew it at the time. With NSW RFS current practices, Back-Burning efforts being done well in front of the Wildfire Fronts, coupled with the 20 year fuel loads, and the intensity these fires, prevented any escape for these animals, trapping ALL wildlife trying to outrun the wildfire front in the middle. DEATH !

NSW RFS mitigation burns are done in a similar way, NSW RFS usually choose the spring months, they do fully encompassed burn practice, meaning all sides of the mitigation areas is lit, burning it on all sides into itself. They then boast on their RFS social media pages, what a great burn they had 16 crews attended 40 volunteers, etc. I have always questioned this mitigation practice, and asked... how can the animals escape? Do you think their spring babies survived ? especially with 7 to 10 years, sometimes more years of fuel build ups before they do these mitigation burns.

Tradition Land Management Practices of Our Indigenous Australians

I have been skilled since the age of 5 with Traditional Fire Management practice, which is the Practices of our Indigenous Australians. Known to me as "Annual" Cold Month Winter Fire Management.

This method of Australian Bush Land Management, not only from the mitigation aspects, but this practice is very much part of Wildlife & Native Flora Conservation & Sustainability. These land management practices had been passed onto pastoralist and people in the bush by our Indigenous Australians since Colonisation.

In my view, Based in my 50yrs living and owning property in the bush, practicing this method of Mitigation and Land Management my whole life, we need to get back to managing our Australian Bush and Landscape in this way.

For Public Lands - Our Indigenous Australians should Manage this, in conjunction with NPWS & State Forest. But our Indigenous Australians should be the leaders of this.

For Private Lands - All Properties should return to ANNUAL Hazard Reduction Cold Month Winter Burning, Both Ground and Pile Burning. Management of this should be by the PROPERTY OWNER. Guided, Taught & Assisted, IF NEEDED, by "LOCAL" RFS Brigades. Councils and Planners should NOT be involved.

Tarthra Bushfire - Indigenous Burning, a very fine example side by side difference between current NPWS and EPA "suppose'd experts" and their mitigation land management, and the traditional mitigation practices and land management of our "real experts", our Indigenous Australians - The

difference depicted here in this video link, speaks for itself. And shows very clearly what we should be doing ! - <https://vimeo.com/270076279?ref=fb-share&fbclid=IwAR3RjFpHCHQZVCB9ANPmCzxhVIXUV7LNhWlvN7ofsgamuL1mP-2vJit2nTw>

(6) In my experience what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well ?

In many regards, so much did not work well !

All Property loss in the Hawkesbury Region [REDACTED] was directly at the hands of the NSW RFS. NO Wildfire Fire Front was responsible for these losses.

ALL Losses were Caused by NSW RFS "Back-Burning Efforts", and caused by "NEW FIRES" lit by the NSW RFS.

There were many instances where NSW RFS management would NOT LISTEN TO LOCAL KNOWLEDGE. Quite Arrogant in their approach, and how they addressed Locals and the Community. As property owners who manage our own lands, even with the policy hinderences, we are NOT child, we are SKILLED ADULTS with regards to Fire and management of that on our own lands.

The NSW Police and NSW RFS in many instances treated us like CHILDREN.

NSW RFS Back-Burn Failure is what caused the most losses at [REDACTED]. NSW RFS were questioned DAYS in Advance by Concerned Locals, with Local knowledge, and question that particular day of the plan NSW RFS back-burn and the predicted weather and humidity. Those Locals were shut-down by LOCAL RFS, all questioning of the RFS planned back-burn on our own Social Media Local Group Pages were removed at request of our Local RFS.

It seems, you're not allowed to question the NSW RFS. If you do question NSW RFS management decisions, the you are attacked for questioning RFS "volunteers". Many had to explain that it was not the boots on the ground champions that they were questioning.

It seems that RFS are not to be questioned and can only ever be portrayed in a positive light. That is ridiculous given all losses in the Hawkesbury Region are at the hands of NSW RFS and their back-burns that went wrong.

This has left many in my community very conflicted. In one regard, boots on the ground RFS, champions doing the best they can to save life and property, conflicted with the facts and knowledge that NSW RFS management, its arrogance, not listening to local knowledge, resulted in you losing your home.. mmm that's a Hard one for the many in that position..

The best intentioned plans, executed poorly, are usually NOT THE BEST PLANS.

The one thing I can think of that went well When the NSW RFS management plans FAILED and went wrong.... The boots on the ground RFS Champions gave it all, it was their efforts to save life and property...

They only were only to fight and protect homes though, RFS Big-wigs apparently told the RFS Crews that it was costing them too much in water, so apparently crews were told they were NOT to save any other property outbuildings or assets etc, other than house. Because of being told this by other Locals, I had just recently spent 30 thousand on some new fencing. I spent 2 day fully clearing these fence lines, I did not want to lose the new fences, knowing that RFS would not be assisting in saving them.

(7) In my experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well ?

Many things didn't work well.

Road-Blocks and Management - As a property owner, you were given 2 options, make the decision to either stay and defend, OR evacuate and leave.

Property owners who had made the decision to stay and defend their properties, were then prevented by road blocks and NSW Police, to access the businesses and services that they needed to access in order to defend their properties.

Road Block locations were constantly moved between [REDACTED], a 25km distance between both locations. Property owners in [REDACTED], not affected or threatened by fire, would go to access fuel, plumbing supplies only to end up block from their properties on returning because a road block location was moved. 2 of my neighbors had to leave their cars and swim the river to get to their properties because of this. Another one of my neighbors who had chosen to stay and defend, the constant random road block location change prevented him from getting water into his house water tank to save his home. The fire was 5 days away, no fire threat and he was hindered in protecting his home. The NSW Police and NSW RFS have no right in prevent a property to get things needed to make all efforts need to protect their home. These practices when there was no fire threat at that time in those locations, was wrong.

Communications & Telstra - I heard on the news that the report into the communications failures during the bushfire was caused due to 'power' and not Telstra or the phone service providers. This is Half truth. I can only go off the [REDACTED] Region experience. [REDACTED] is the place where Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull announce the fixing the Mobile service Black-spot areas 8 years ago, federal Government funds went into this. Telstra did minor improvements to the mobile their mobile network tower at [REDACTED], the Telstra tower improvements did very little in addressing the Mobile Black-spot problems. For me, Nothing at all changed, my home is still located in a mobile black-spot area. Optus also has a mobile tower at [REDACTED]. Neither of these towers were affected by fire. However, power and power lines were. The Mobile Tower back-up batteries last 5 hours when "power" is disrupted. Optus will put a power generator on their tower. Telstra WILL NOT.

The Landline service in [REDACTED] is one of Telstra's (what they call) "Legacy Services". My Telstra Service is via the "Lower Portland Telstra Exchange" and part of their "legacy service". Telstra is NOT INTERESTED in up-grading or improving the "legacy service" or exchange. The Back-up batteries in the lower Portland exchange (an old exchange) have not been replaced, and they need to be. The Batteries in the event of power failure are meant to run the exchange for 2 to 3 days.

Yes there was power failure due to power pole infrastructure damage at [REDACTED], not [REDACTED] though.

NSW RFS were providing RFS escort through the road block area for endeavor energy. Telstra and the telco would have been given the same RFS service to restore telecommunication services. Telstra used the excuse when contacted, that they could not get through the road blocks etc. The Telstra Lower Portland exchange is on the south side of the Colo River, and absolutely nowhere near any fires, nor was the exchange access for Telstra hindered by any road blocks. The fact of the matter is, that Telstra did NOT wish to spend the money replacing old batteries in the "legacy service exchange" nor did they wish the expense of putting a power generator on their mobile phone service tower. How convenient for them to pass the buck simply to the energy companies.

With No telecommunications NSW RFS warnings, apps etc... NON EXISTANT... Useless NSW RFS SERVICE, how much of our Tax payer dollars did we spend on that..

RFS Apps Fires Near me - The information on this app was vague, not accurate 24/hours behind, and totally useless for anyone on the ground at specific locations dealing with an unfolding situation.

RFS and Police Management - Seemed to have no problem escorting media at any given time, however RFS prevent those planned to come and give me assistance, and other property owners, with protecting their homes and properties. I was very angry about this. Those that had made the decision, such as myself and many others, were all prevented or hindered by NSW Police, and NSW RFS in doing that. In my mind, they had not right at all to hinder or prevent property owners from doing this, protecting their stock and homes.

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

preparation, mitigation, - **1.** Get back to Annual Hazard Reduction Burns in the Winter Months for ALL Lands Public and Private. **2.** Our Ingenious Australians to Lead Land Management of All NPWS, State Forests, and including World Heritage Listed Areas in the practices of Traditional Land Management Practices. **3.** Abolish the EPA & all policies of the legislated EP & A Act. 1979 **4.** Remove ALL EP & A Act Policies from the NSW Rural Fires Act 1997. **5.** Remove the Clean Air Act. from the Rural Fires Act. and remove/ exempt mitigation from or within the Clean Air Act. **6.** Remove local Council involvement or interference from the Rural Fires Act. 1997.

Recovery Coordination - I watched Hawkesbury Council take Scott Morrison's 1 million and put it towards Hawkesbury Councils "Normal Operating Costs" - One level of Government giving with one hand, only for another level of Government to take with the other hand. I went and spoke before my Council on this. Like it made a difference, NOT. I have not received a cent, and somehow I have to find 5k along with other property owners to fix private roads. Council took part of the 1mil money for their public roads. I question Hawkesbury Council on this, I would of thought that Public Roads and signs would of been covered by Councils own insurance. The whole thing is One big Joke frankly. Many [REDACTED] are still in the same situation since the NSW RFS Back-burn fire went wrong, the situation has not changed. Here we are 6months on.

(9) Is there anything else that I would like to tell the Royal Commission ?

The NSW Premier, should have accepted Defence assistance, she should of requested it also. She didn't no doubt under the Advice of her NSW RFS Commissioner. In 1994 we had the Navy assist at [REDACTED].

In these Bushfires, it felt very much like they (NSW RFS and the NSW Government) wanted us and our houses to burn. I'm not kidding, that's what it felt like. And it was not just me that felt that way, it was Everyone !