



Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Submission Cover Sheet

This cover sheet has been prepared by the Commission's public contact team to accompany a submission.

Person completing cover sheet

1. **Staff member name** [REDACTED]
2. **Date completed** 1 July 2020
3. **This cover sheet has been completed based on:**
 - details contained in the submission
 - a phone call with the person making the submission
 - an email from the person making the submission
 - Other (provide details) -

Submission details

4. **Full name** [REDACTED]
5. **Email** [REDACTED]
6. **Telephone** [REDACTED]
7. **Preferred method of contact** Email
8. **Is the submission based on:**
 - primarily based on their personal situation.
 - primarily based on their professional knowledge, qualifications or experience, or on behalf of a group or organisation
9. **If the person is making the submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation:**

If the submission based on personal experience:

10. **What was their personal situation in relation to the 2019-20 Bushfires? Choose all that apply.**
 - were not living in an area affected by bushfire
 - were in an area affected by bushfires but was not evacuated, and didn't suffer personal or financial loss
 - lived in an area affected by bushfires and was evacuated, but didn't suffer personal or financial loss
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- lived in an area affected by bushfires and was evacuated, and I suffered personal or financial loss
- part of the emergency response as a fire fighter on the ground
- part of the emergency response as an aerial fire fighter
- part of the emergency response as health professional
- part of the emergency response as an Australian Defence Force member
- part of the emergency response as a Commonwealth or State government employee
- assisted the emergency response as a community support volunteer
- assisted the emergency recovery (i.e. after the fire event) as a community support volunteer
- Other

11. Where does the person live:

Local Government Area	Choose an item.
Town name	Grafton
Post code	2460

If the submission is based on professional experience

12. What is your area of expertise? Please choose all that apply.

- Emergency/disaster response and/or management
- Environment/land management
- Land use, planning, building standards
- Impacts of changes in climatic conditions
- Wildlife conservation
- Traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians
- Community welfare
- Other

All submissions

13. Does the person agree to their submission being published?

- Yes, agree to the submission being published in their name
 - Yes, agree to the submission being published anonymously
 - No, does not agree to the submission being published
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Submission 2019 2020 Bush Fires

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED] Home [REDACTED]

Preferred Contact: Email then Mobile SMS

- Details of Information supplied: Supplied based primarily on Personal Situation.
- We live in an area affected by bush fire. We were not evacuated and suffered no personal loss. Even though we suffered major losses in 2002 fires.
- Additionally, we have our own fire truck.
- Also, part of emergency response team for the surrounding area. The fires got to within 6 Km of our property.

Council: Clarence Valley County Council.

Grafton 2460.

- I have worked with RFS for 30 years. I hold Crew Leader and Aircraft Radio Operator [CASA] and Airbase Operator qualifications. Plus, Aerodrome Safety Officer.
- I have been deployed out of area on numerous occasions.
- [REDACTED]
- Have worked for NSW Forest Corporation as fire Fighter.

Input Comments:

- The overall response from RFS was not planned, and only as a reaction. Even though they are the professionals. RFS have numerous other fires to deal with over many years thus should be far more prepared.
- [REDACTED] the local BFMC they have put in place Village Protection Strategy's. These are simply coloured lines around villages. They indicate different areas, APZ and SFZ. These refer to Asset Protection Zone and Strategic Fire Zone. The fuel levels in these areas are to be managed. However, there is no track or trail to burn from to reduce the

fuel. Thus, it is only the fuel load that will decide the intensity and the size of the fire. The maps lull people into false sense of security.

- Thus, the only way to minimise fire is to reduce the amount of fuel. Take one leg away in the heat triangle then there is no combustion.
- RFS have used log skidders to put in fire breaks. These are made to pull timber from forests, not do fire breaks. The highway upgrade has numerous bull dozers which could have been utilised.
- The use of town treated water for fire trucks is not acceptable. The Clarence River is massive. Also, the discharge from sewerage treatment works is supposed to be drinkable quality. The RFS contract Fire Boss [float plane] can pick up from the rivers or lakes, so why not use other water.
- Ground crews should look at using foam or gell or similar retardant to enhance the capability of the water.
- NSWFR should only do property protection in villages as their trucks are not designed to do bush work. This a Major Duty of Care Issue. No “halo” water bar, cabin protection, wheel sprays fuel line protection etc. on their trucks.
- Queensland Rural Fire sent tucks down and they also do not have the sprays etc as mentioned above. Again, Duty of Care.
- Communication between agencies is difficult or non-existent. We need portable repeater stations like we offered to RFS. Trailer with Solar and Wind generator.
- All trucks should have large screen GPS units uploaded with all the maps for fire trails.
- I am aware of a Deputy Captain from RFS who went out of area and acted as Divisional Commander with 100 people under him. There are many qualifications before you can reach that status. Completely different terrain.
- One instance when a local crew had to wait for clearance from Sydney to put in a back burn. Naturally the wind came up in the afternoon, making it more difficult. They were on the job and had a full understanding of the situation.
- Meals and accommodation are poor. Large areas of a lot of stretchers in a room.
- One member said “Two Devon sandwiches with brown stuff on it” a piece of fruit, a popper and a bag of chips. All meals should be prepared

by professional people, and dietician approved. For the shift required to be worked. [Normally 12 hours]. Some people would eat more than 2 slices of bread. But is given out by number of crew.

- Queensland RFS have P3 masks. Full face and more effective than NSW RFS. Duty of Care.
- Also, a Gas Monitor under mask with alarms pre-set to warn wearer. A Major Duty of Care Item. The filters should be analysed to see what toxins.
- NSWFR have self-contained breathing apparatus. CBA. Duty of Care.
- Transport to and from home should be same as NPWS and other agencies. Driven home by car to ensure safe arrival due to fatigue.
- Fire trails are virtually non-existent. Use Universal Key. Problem is that a lot of trails have massive wash outs. Cost saving by all agencies.
- Fires Near Me is not correct as map showed an area previously marked as burnt. The map of 12 November 2019 was excellent as it showed the possible spread. This was most possibly sent out in error. However, it is the most meaningful map ever published. Use night flights to map.
- A statement from agencies as to what the fuel loading is to be. This will then equate to when HR to be done.
- When a Section 44 is declared then all costs are picked up by the government. Not out of agency budget. Thus, it is in their interest to get HR done for free.
- In conclusion it is very clear that the current situation does not work. We should not have to get God to let it rain.
- The fires have nothing to do with Climate Change, Global Warming nor Climate emergency. It is simply combustible material waiting to be burnt.

On a personal note:

- I asked 4 years ago for the RFS to assist me in a HR on part of our property. The section in question bounds a hard rock quarry 500 metres wide and 100 metres deep. The Council refused the RFS to use the quarry as a stop point if required. Area still not burnt. Simply rock will not burn, nor is there any combustible material in the quarry. Our front fence was destroyed in 2002. Council elected to ignore replacement cost. Cost \$38000:00

- I would welcome the opportunity of discussing this submission, as there is only so much you can write. There needs to be open discussions. With consideration given to all suggestions.
- It is as simple as The Fire Triangle take one leg away and there is no fire.

Possible Changes:

- The present situation should not be allowed to continue in its present form the fires 32 people lost their life. Coupled to this nearly all of NSW and Victoria was burnt out.
- Plans should be made as to how much area needs to be burnt, depending on the prevailing wind to protect major assets. A simple block diagram utilizing landscape features. Maintain fire trails and ensure that selfish people do not damage them. Too many have been closed.
- There needs to be a meeting of people such as myself to sit down quietly and detail into a format how the enquiry needs the information. The NSW Farmers BFMC has had several meetings to put ideas and suggestions forward. However, these meetings are too far apart and only last for several hours. The representative from the Orange district should be invited as they have developed maps and plans which show the whole situation. The situation of simply drawing coloured lines around Village Protection Plans is unacceptable.
- There should be complete compatibility of the various state's trucks regarding crew and vehicle protection. This is essential Duty of Care responsibility. The loss of trucks by NSWFR is completely unacceptable. Fortunately, no lives were lost. Simply those vehicles should not been there with untrained crew and unacceptable vehicles.
- Supporting papers can be supplied on request. There is no sense in sending unless requested. Perhaps a telephone conference to start. I am very willing to travel as face to face is far more practical.
- I agree to have this submission published along with my name. It is my obligation to highlight the faults as I see them. Not to submit this would be neglect of care and responsibility.

Yours sincerely,



10 March 2020

