

## **SUBMISSION TO BUSH FIRE ENQUIRY – ONLINE. EMAILED 18 APRIL 2020.**

**Acknowledgement received email 18 April 2020 from NSW Government.**

### **YOUR STORY**

We are a retired couple in our seventies who live on a property which backs onto the Bodalla State Forest Compartment 3006. On 31 December 2019 we were woken early the morning by text messages and phone messages from the Rural Fire Service advising us to evacuate to Moruya if the path was clear as bushfires were approaching. Checking the RFS site we saw that the fires in the Dampier Forest (to the west of us) and Badja Forest (to the south) had been increasing in size. Opening our curtains we saw red skies and thick dark smoke billowing. For several months we had grown used to waking up to smoke from fires burning to the north, south and west but as normally happens didn't think the fires were close enough to affect us. However, for a couple of months after New Year's Eve we were on standby to evacuate several times. Once, as we were getting ready to leave we received messages that it was too late to leave and that we should seek shelter as the fires approached, this time coming from Potato Point as well, with some roads closed. We only realised how close the fires had come to the village when we next were able to leave Bodalla and saw the burnt landscape right up to some of its borders, with the road to Potato Point still closed. Having met people we knew who lived in Eurobodalla and Nerrigundah, we realised how very lucky we had been not to have lost our property as they had, especially as our boundary fence is the Bodalla State Forest. Nevertheless, those days and nights of wondering "will it be our next turn next?", with frequent power outages adding to our anxiety, had its impacts psychologically as we wondered whether this was going to be the new normality each summer.

### **CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

I would like the Inquiry to investigate the role played by prolonged drought which would have contributed to the ferocity of the fires. We ourselves were worried about the dry conditions in our grounds which, if fires had reached the Forest, would have provided ready fuel for a quick path to our house. The drought itself has been seen as a result of rising temperatures which have been linked to climate change which because of our current federal government's tardiness in action remains the elephant in the room. Therefore, it would surely be appropriate to address climate change as a major underlying cause of these catastrophic fires. Another problem which has emerged is that of logging of native forests where huge dump piles of rejected tree trunks, and branch and leaf debris littering forest floors after logging - another tinderbox which could turn the slightest spark into a conflagration (attached photo file-8\_0.jpeg example post logging Bodalla State Forest Compartment 3006). Stronger State environmental regulations are needed to monitor the logging industry so that shoddy practices are monitored to protect the environment and ensure that human lives are not endangered when bush fires erupt.

### **PREPARATION AND PLANNING**

More funding is needed to provide rural fire services with the equipment which is needed in what is surely going to become a more frequent bush fire event each season. We should also be thinking of those doughty volunteers who put their lives on the line to fight our fires, sometimes in the process tragically losing their own lives and properties.

## **RESPONSE TO BUSHFIRES**

A timely thank-you to the Bodalla Rural Fire Service whose response and regular patrols in our road helped us to make the right decisions at each critical point in the bush fire crisis, and to our police force for visiting each individual property to advise of upcoming bad days and offering assistance if needed!

Attached photo file-8\_0.jpeg