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Submission to the Council of Australian Governments

Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management

I am a forester with 37 years experience of management and protection of public and private native forests in NSW including: the Northern Rivers, Northern Tablelands, Central West Slopes, and the Far South West.

All landholders of both public and private lands must have an obligation to protect their property from the risk of wildfire and to prevent the spread of wildfire from their property.

1. If we exclude wildfire without managing/reducing fuel loads we ensure that wildfire is most likely to occur during the worst possible conditions, inflicting the most severe damage over the greatest area.
2. Regular, strategic hazard reduction should be carried out, such as:
 - (i) Reducing hazard where fire is most likely to originate. For example vulnerable roadsides and along railway lines, or where people congregate, or just recognising some neighbours as high risk.
 - (ii) Reducing the risk of fire escaping from your property, especially providing a low risk buffer between a "no burn" conservation area and your boundary.
3. Strategic hazard reduction is the most effective means of preventing access or escape of fire under most circumstances. During extreme wildfire conditions it may not contain a holocaust type fire **but** it will at least give some chance of reducing fire intensity and rate of spread.
4. In many cases strategic hazard reduction gives the opportunity for a wildfire to be contained and rendered safe **before** extreme conditions arrive.
5. Land managers need the ability to use narrow windows of opportunity to reduce hazards. In NSW at present there appears to be a need to have an event specific hazard reduction plan approved before the event. If you miss an opportunity you have to go back to square one, and then if Government Agencies are involved, delays and paper work compound.
6. If administrative delays cannot be overcome, the problems of lighting the hazard reduction match could give rise to a new generation of elusive arsonists. *On the right day at the right time a fire call will go out and smart fire fighting tactics will fortuitously ensure that necessary hazard reduction is achieved. Years ago on the North Coast of NSW many farmers either had dogs that could light matches or were just plain lucky, because they always seemed to be in the pub or at a sale when the smoke went up on the ridge that needed a "bit of a burn".*

Vic Eddy
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