

From: Gerry and Sue White
To: AFAC Review (DPFEM)
Subject: Tasmanian Fire Review

To whom it may concern.
Thanks for the opportunity to make a short submission.

My comments are not about the actions that were taken during the 2019 Tasmanian Fires but about preparedness, or otherwise at the household and community level. There is often the mantra that 'they' need to sort out a problem - in this case, lessening the risk of major damage from bush fires. The essence of my submission is that there also should be attention to how we can help ourselves to be better prepared to withstand bushfires. There are two specific points below with questions about their usefulness but there may well be other processes and procedures that we can adopt to be better prepared in the future. For example, has any organisation done a realistic review of BAL requirements and the capacity of buildings built under BAL codes to withstand a given level of fire? What ramifications does any research that has been done on BAL on the majority of housing in Tasmania that has no BAL rating?

One other issue that deserves considerably more attention is, that because fire susceptibility is increased due to climate change, Tasmania needs to seriously address the need to reduce emissions - as a matter of urgency. There are many things we could be doing but I expect that this is beyond the brief of this review.

1. 'Phone Trees'

We lived in Kettering for about 25 years and were involved in a phone tree arrangement which was called the 'fire guard' in the road we lived. In the last few years my wife was the phone tree organiser which meant producing a list of names, contacts and basic property details about people in the road. The aim, of course, was that in the event that a fire was about reported to be imminent each person phoned the next person on the list to ensure that they were aware of the threat. Basically it was a self help scheme. We had a Christmas party which was reasonably well attended in the volunteer fire station. It assisted with the sense of community as the phone tree concept provided a contact point for people living in the road to meet neighbours.

Questions - Do 'professional' fire authorities support the formation of phone tree systems? If so, what mechanisms could be applied to develop and build more phone networks?

2. Property 'walk throughs'

Another scheme that operated some time ago in the Channel was that a designated experienced fire fighter would conduct a walk through of a property looking at how well prepared it was to defend in case of a fire. This was extremely useful for the owner of the property to understand if they were really ready for a fire, what parts of the property were vulnerable and what further action needed to be taken. In a collaborative spirit neighbours would also be involved on the walk through. It only took about half an hour to get a realistic impression of how well a property was prepared. So after viewing a few properties even an inexperienced observer had a good idea about how prepared a property was for a bush fire. Socially it was also a good way to meet and interact with

neighbours and it would probably be useful in assisting others when actually fighting a fire.

Questions - Do professional fire authorities support the organised inspection of properties to assess fire preparedness? Is this sort of scheme still operating anywhere in Tasmania? If the concept is supported, how could it be ramped up in bush fire susceptible areas?

Thank you.
Regards,
Gerry

Gerry and Sue White