



# COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF BUSHFIRE SAFETY: OCTOBER 2013 BUSHFIRES

PART 2: ONLINE SURVEY OF RESIDENTS  
RESEARCH FOR THE NEW SOUTH WALES RURAL FIRE SERVICE

**Bronwyn Horsey and Trent Penman**

University of Wollongong





---

© Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre 2014.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form without prior written permission from the copyright owner, except under the conditions permitted under the Australian Copyright Act 1968 and subsequent amendments.

Publisher: Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, East Melbourne, Victoria

ISBN: 978-0-9925027-3-7

Cover:

The partially burnt landscape surrounding Lithgow in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. Photo by the Bushfire CRC.

Citation: Horsey B and Penman T, (2014) Community understanding and awareness of bushfire safety: October 2013 bushfires, Part 2: online survey of residents, Bushfire CRC, Australia, ISBN: 978-0-9925027-3-7

Disclaimer:

The University of Wollongong and the Bushfire CRC advise that the information contained in this publication comprises general statements based on scientific research. The reader is advised and needs to be aware that such information may be incomplete or unable to be used in any specific situation. No reliance or actions must therefore be made on that information without seeking prior expert professional, scientific and technical advice. To the extent permitted by law, The University of Wollongong and the Bushfire CRC (including its employees, partners and consultants) excludes all liability to any person for any consequences, including but not limited to all losses, damages, costs, expenses and any other compensation, arising directly or indirectly from using this publication (in part or in whole) and any information or material contained in it.

---

---

## Table of Contents

---

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>METHODS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>4</b>
Personal and Household Details	5
Home and Community	7
Pets and Livestock	17
Previous Experience of Bush fire	17
Preparing for Bush fire	20
Bush Fire Survival Plan	22
Information Received Before the Fire	30
Neighbourhood Safer Places	32
The days before the fire	33
Fire area	36
On the day of the fire	39
Questions about Leaving	48
Questions about Staying	52
Questions about Sheltering	55
Assistance in protecting property	56
Utilities	57
Questions about Damage	58
Questions about Messaging	60
Community Meetings	64
NSW RFS media briefings	66
Further Comments	67
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>70</b>

---

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2013, a number of large destructive bush fires resulted in the loss of property in the greater Sydney area. Following such events, it is important to liaise with the community to understand their actions on the day and what agency information was effective and what was not. Learning from these events means that management responses can be improved for future bush fires, hopefully resulting in a reduced loss of property and the ongoing protection of life.

The Centre for Environmental Risk Management at the University of Wollongong ran an extensive online survey for residents in the fire affected areas. While the survey covered a broad range of issues, the key findings were:

1. Understanding of preparedness information in the communities affected is relatively high, however many residents still question the value of a written Bush Fire Survival Plan;
2. The majority of those that have prepared a Bush Fire Survival Plan have actively sought information from NSW RFS website or local volunteers;
3. Generally, NSW RFS terminology is well understood indicating a successful education campaign. However, the term "Neighbourhood Safer Place" is the exception. More work may be needed at the local scale to make residents aware of the term and the locality of their nearest Neighbourhood Safer Place;
4. A high number of residents returned to their house when they heard of the fire, rather than staying away. Without additional information about the specific circumstances, research suggests that this a high risk strategy (Haynes *et al.*, 2010; Bianchi *et al.*, 2012);
5. It is a positive sign that most residents who left early would do so again even when their house wasn't directly threatened;
6. Many households had some or all residents stay to defend their property because it was considered safe to do so. Only a small proportion of respondents reported damage, so this decision was reinforced by the circumstances;
7. Prior to and during fires, the NSW RFS website is generally seen as a reliable source of up to date and localised information;
8. Facebook pages of the NSW RFS and local brigades are considered a useful medium for transmitting up to date information;
9. Recorded telephone messages or text messages are the preferred medium for transmitting emergency warnings, with social media ranked poorly; and
10. The quality, timing, local nature and value of information provided throughout the emergency were ranked highly across all mediums.

## INTRODUCTION

In October 2013, a number of large destructive bush fires resulted in the loss of property in the greater Sydney area. The winter months of 2013 were particularly dry and an unusually warm September and October resulted in conditions conducive to large bush fires. On 17 October 2013, high temperatures coupled with strong winds resulted in fast moving fires that impacted on populations in the Blue Mountains, Wingecarribee, Central Coast and Port Stephens areas. Over 200 houses were destroyed in these fires, with hundreds more damaged. These events have significant impacts on local communities as they try to rebuild following the fire.

Following such events, it is important to liaise with the community to understand their actions on the day and what agency information was effective and what was not. Learning from these events means that management responses can be improved for future bush fires, hopefully resulting in a reduced loss of property and the ongoing protection of life.

Direct interaction with residents provides invaluable information for research; however it is impossible to reach all residents in a timely fashion. Online surveys provide a means for reaching a greater audience in a non-confrontational manner. Residents can complete a survey in the comfort of their home at a time that suits them. Combining direct interviews and online surveys allows researchers to build a better understanding of the range of issues addressed.

In this report, we summarise the findings of an online survey run by the Centre for Environmental Risk Management at the University of Wollongong. The work was funded by the NSW Rural Fire Service and managed by the Bushfire CRC. The online survey was designed to complement the semi-structured interviews co-ordinated by the Bushfire CRC in December 2013. It is important to note that although this report deals solely with the result of the online survey, it also provides a basis for the identification of further research questions that can be explored in greater detail.

---

## METHODS

An online survey was designed using the Survey Monkey © program. The survey was designed to replicate the issues raised in the semi-structured interviews. In particular, the survey was designed to gather data consistent with that recorded on the “blue sheets” (Appendix A) in the semi-structured interviews managed by La Trobe University and the Bushfire CRC. An initial survey was designed and refined in an iterative process involving the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Bushfire CRC. The final survey design appears in Appendix B.

Advertising for the survey was conducted primarily through social media and website advertising. The NSW Rural Fire Service advertised the survey on their official webpage, Twitter feed and Facebook pages. This advertising was then reposted by a number of the local brigades through their Twitter and Facebook pages. The Bushfire CRC used their webpage and Twitter feed to advertise the survey. University of Wollongong staff advertised through personal Twitter feeds and Facebook pages. An initial campaign was mounted when the survey first appeared on 30 January 2014. This was followed by subsequent Tweets by the NSW RFS late in February to target areas poorly represented in the survey.

Data were analysed in a variety of ways. Most individual questions were stand alone and analysis of summary data was considered sufficient. In these cases, data are presented as summary tables or graphically. The responses to some of the questions were expected to vary with gender, age or geographic area, and therefore were analysed across these additional variables and presented graphically. Respondents who only answered the basic details but did not engage in the main content of the survey were removed from the analysis as their responses do not provide any insight to the issues of interest.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 926 respondents who started the survey, 38 indicated they did not agree to the survey terms and conditions by clicking “I do not wish to proceed”, leaving a total of 888 respondents. Responses where no further questions were answered beyond this first one were removed from the analysis, leaving a total of 775 respondents.

The response rate to questions dropped through the survey, which is to be expected. The survey was long with over 100 potential questions and survey fatigue is a common issue. However, there were still over 400 respondents who completed the entire survey (Figure 1).

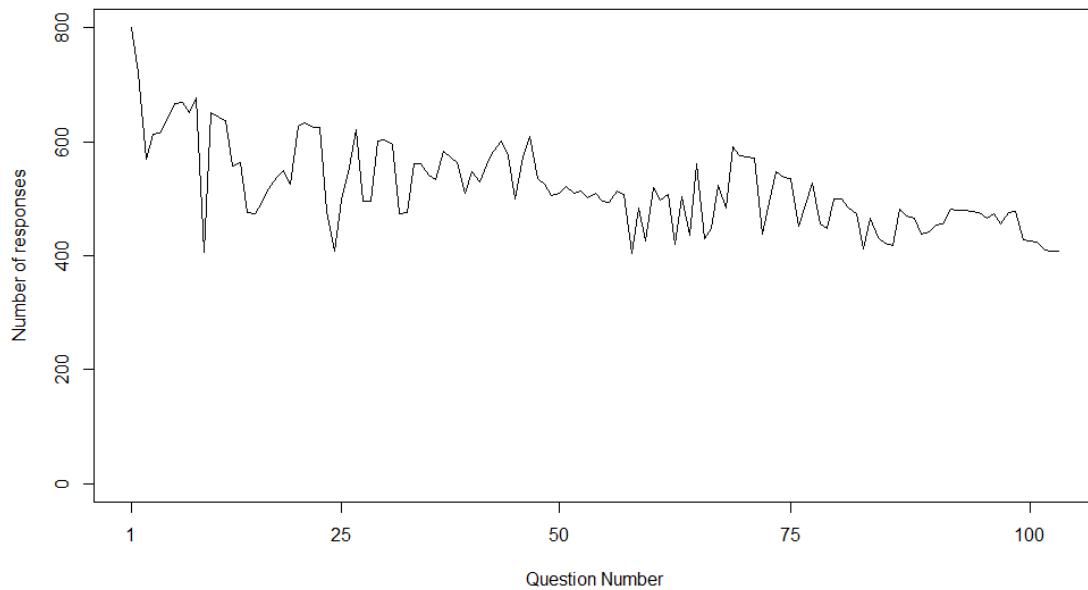


Figure 1 Response rate throughout the survey

Communities that had been affected by the October 2013 fire had been canvassed by the face-to-face interview teams; the survey asked respondents whether they had already participated in any other surveys relating to these fires. Seventeen respondents had already had interaction through the semi-structured interviews run by La Trobe University.

## PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD DETAILS

A total of 720 respondents answered the questions about their gender and age, with more females (424, 59%) responding to the survey than males (296, 41%). The 35 - 44 age category had the greatest representation (>26%), with the other categories forming a normal-like curve around this category (Figure 2). More females answered the survey in the middle age categories (between 25 and 64) whilst slightly more males answered the survey in the two outer categories, representing the youngest and oldest respondents (18 - 24 and 65 - 74). This differs from the semi-structured interviews which tended to have older participants.

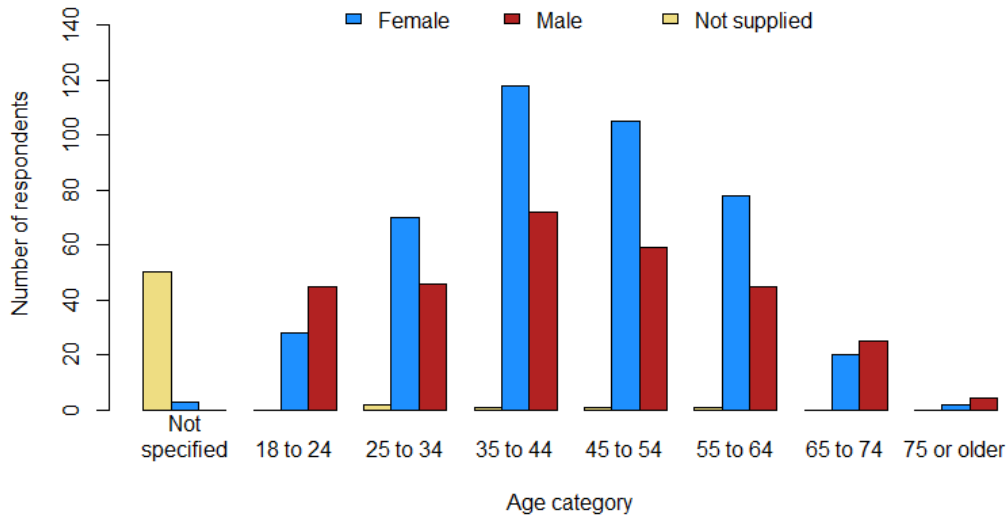


Figure 2 Age category distribution by gender of respondents (Q4 & 5).

### Employment (Q. 6)

A total of 720 respondents answered the question about employment, nearly half of which described their employment status as “Full time paid employment” (350, 45%), with a further 21% (165) selecting “Part-time / casual employment”. There were considerably more females in the “Full time domestic duties” and “Part-time / casual employment” categories, whilst there were more males in the “Full time paid employment” category (Figure 3).

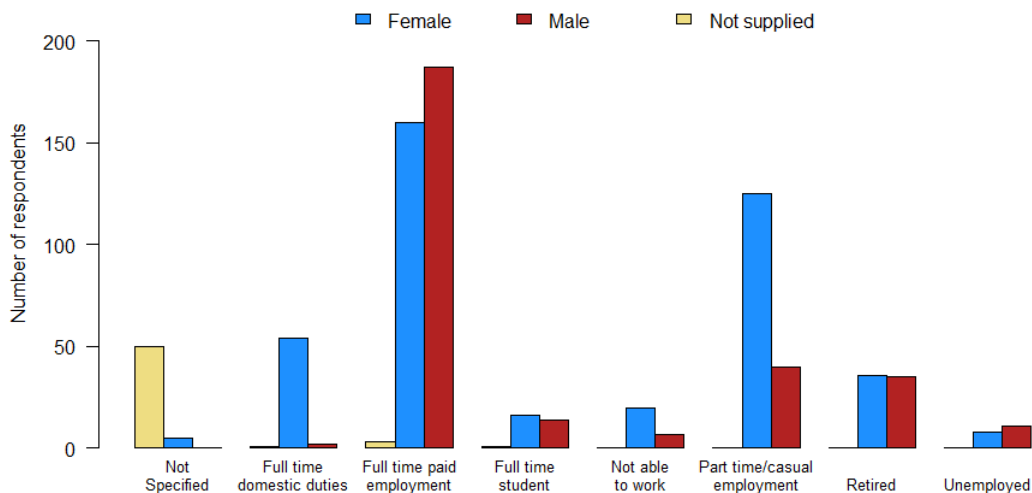


Figure 3 Employment status of respondents by gender (Q6).



## Household composition (Q. 7)

A total of 694 respondents answered the question about household composition. Of those that did respond, the most common household composition description was “Couple with dependent children” (260, 34%), followed by “Couple” (167, 22%) and “Couple with adult children” (91, 12%) (Table 1). The comments given in free-text “Other” option were specific variants on the existing categories.

Table 1 Household composition of survey respondents (Q7).

	No. respondents	Percentage
Couple with dependent children	260	34%
Couple	167	22%
Couple with adult children	91	12%
Not specified	81	10%
Sole resident	58	7%
Family shared with older parent(s)	34	4%
Single parent with dependent children	27	3%
Single parent with adult children	21	3%
Other shared adult household	20	3%
Multiple families with dependent children	9	1%
Couple shared with older parent(s)	4	1%
Multiple families with adult children	3	0.4%

## Age distribution (Q. 8)

A total of 676 respondents answered the question about the usual number of people who live at their house and their age categories. The total number of people that live at the respondents’ house (calculated by adding the number of people in each age category) ranged from 1 through to 8 and had a mean of 3.3 (Table 2). One response was from a boarding house which had 30 residents, however this was excluded from the aforementioned statistics.

Table 2 Age distribution of people in respondents house (Q8).

AGE CATEGORY	Number of people in house							TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Other	
Adults (older than 65)	65	45	2	0	0	0	27*	161
Adults (19 to 65)	91	371	85	48	15	4		1379
Teenagers (13 to 18)	95	56	5	2	0	0	30**	230
Children 6 to 12 years	75	57	14	2	0	0		239
Children 2 to 6 years	60	28	1	0	0	0		119
Children <2 years	48	4	0	0	0	0		56

\* previously answered the age question as 25-34 and no other questions answered after the "27"

\*\* answered "boarding house" in type of household

## HOME AND COMMUNITY

Of the 531 respondents who provided a postcode in their address, nearly half (258, 49%) were from the Blue Mountain region (Table 3). Just under a quarter were from the Southern Highlands (125, 24%), whilst just over 10% were from the third region that experienced fires in October 2013, Central Coast / Port Stephens (61, 11%). A number of respondents lived in suburbs classified as “Western Sydney” (44, 8%) which were adjacent to the Southern Highlands or the Blues Mountains. Small numbers of respondents listed their address in other NSW regions: Central West Slopes, South West Slopes, Western NSW, Illawarra, and the North Coast.

Table 3 Regional breakdown of respondents addresses using provided postcodes.

Region	No. Respondents	% of Respondents
Blue Mountains	258	49%
Southern Highlands	125	24%
Central Coast / Port Stephens	61	11%
Western Sydney	44	8%
Central West Slopes	10	2%
South West Slopes	8	2%
Western NSW	8	2%
North & Inner Sydney suburbs	7	1%
Illawarra	5	1%
North Coast	5	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>531</b>	

A total of 556 respondents answered the question asking them how long they had lived at the address they supplied. The length of time that respondents had lived at their address ranged from 1 through 63 years, with the majority (216, 39%) of respondents having lived at their residence for 0 - 5 years (Table 4).

Table 4 Length of time respondents had lived at their residence (Q10).

Years at Residence	No. Respondents	% of Respondents
0-5	216	39%
5-10	107	19%
11-15	87	16%
16-20	56	10%
21-25	36	7%
26-30	23	4%
31-35	16	3%
36-40	9	2%
41-45	4	1%
46-50	1	<1%
>50	1	<1%

Respondents were asked if it was a multigenerational property to indicate how many years the property had been in their family. Only 32 respondents answered this question and responses ranged from 2 to 170 years, with an average of 45 years (Table 5). Low values that were provided for “multigenerational property” suggests respondents believed it to mean multiple generations living at the property rather than a property that has been passed through multiple generations.

Table 5 Length of time multigenerational properties had been in respondents families (Q10).

Years in family	No. Respondents	Years in family	No. Respondents
2	1	33	1
3	1	35	2
4	1	38	1
5	1	40	1
9	1	42	1
13	1	43	1
16	1	50	1
20	3	57	1
25	1	60	1
27	2	80	2
28	1	170	1

### Type of residence (Q. 11)

A total of 577 respondents answered the question asking them to indicate whether their property was their main residence or a secondary or holiday residence. Of those that did respond to this question the vast majority (568, 98%) indicated it was their main residence, with minimal representation of those responding for secondary residences (7, 1%) and holidays houses (2, <1%).

### Property ownership (Q. 12)

A total of 579 respondents answered the question asking them whether they owned, rented or managed their property. Of those that answered, the majority (472, 82%) indicated they owned their property, with 97 (17%) renting. Only 10 (2%) were managers of the property (Figure 4).

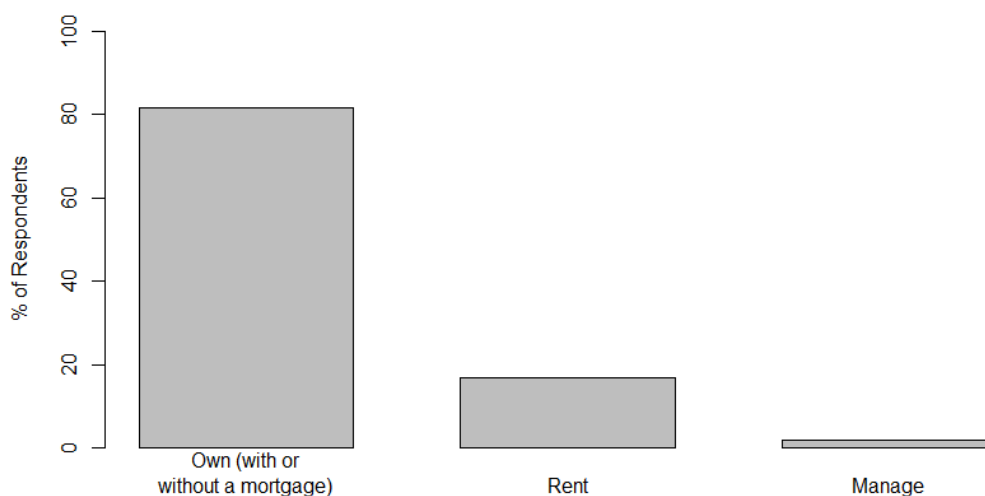


Figure 4 Breakdown of respondents who own, rent or manage their property (Q12).

## Property size (Q. 13)

A total of 565 respondents answered the question asking them to describe their property in terms of residential size or acreage. Of those that did respond, the most common answer was “House on a residential-sized block” (404, 72%), with the next largest group being those that responded to “House on Small acreage (<10ha / 20 acres)” (128, 23%). Only 33 (6%) indicated they described their property as being a “House on large acreage (>10ha / 20 acres)” (Figure 5).

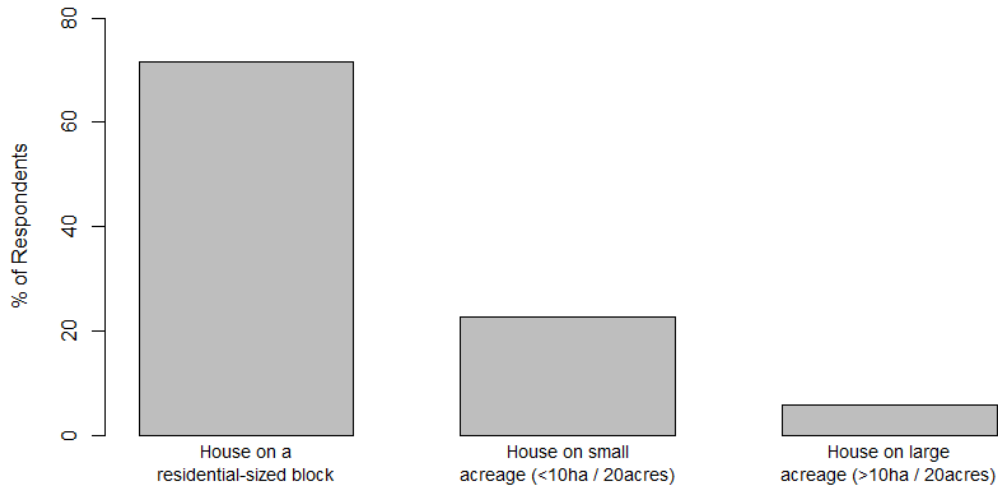


Figure 5 Respondents' description of the size of their property (Q13).

## Proximity to bushland (Q. 14, 15, & 16)

A total of 586 respondents answered the question whether their property was adjacent to bushland. Just over half (340, 58%) of the respondents who answered this question said yes. A follow-on question then asked respondents to indicate how many sides of their property had bushland. This question was only answered by those that said yes to the previous question (340). The majority of these (55%) answered that they had bushland on just one side of their property (Figure 6). A further 24% indicated they had bushland on two sides, with the remainder of respondent being equally split between the 3- and 4-side groups (11% each). Those that answered no to the bushland adjacent to property question (246) were asked how far away the nearest bushland was. Whilst there was little differentiation between the categories (Figure 7), the most commonly selected on was “100-300m away” (26%), with the least common category being “One house-block away” (7%).

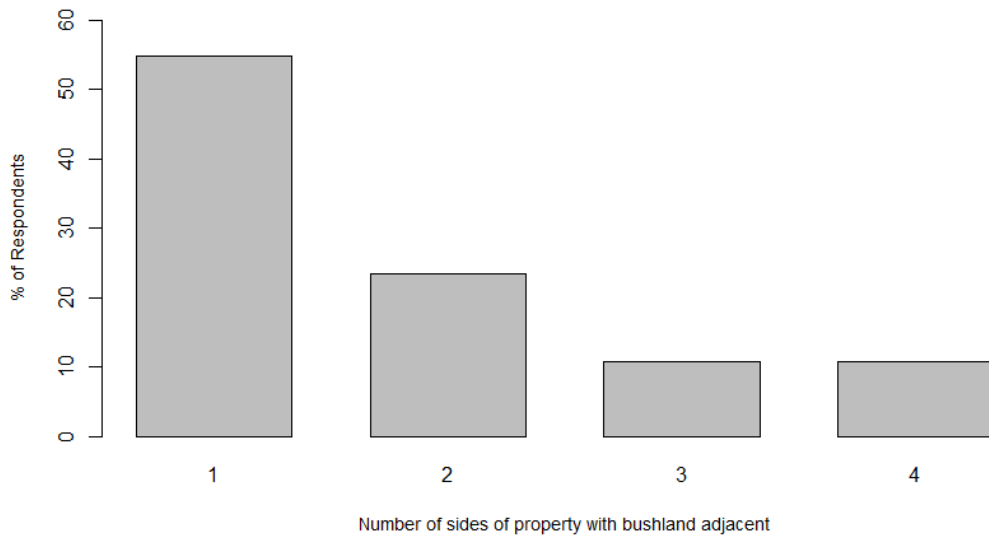


Figure 6 Respondents who have bushland adjacent to their house by the number of sides (Q15).

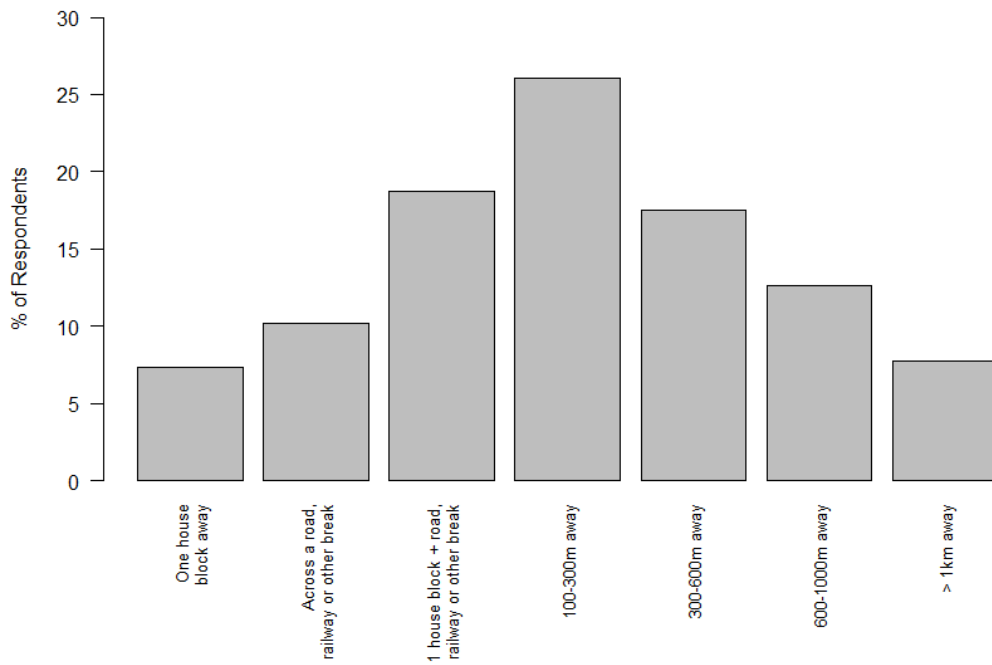


Figure 7 Distance from property to nearest bushland as indicated by the respondents not adjacent to bushland (Q16).

## Descriptors of the area (Q. 17)

A total of 558 respondents ticked at least one of the answers describing the context of their property. The largest group described their property context as “Bushland adjacent to an urban area” (243, 44%), closely followed by “Urban or suburban (189, 34%) (Figure 8). Approximately 20% (121) said their property was in a “Predominantly rural” area, and 10% (57) described their area as “Area with a rural history adjacent to an urban area”. Smaller numbers described their property as “Agricultural” (15, 3%), and “Commercial” (4, 1%).

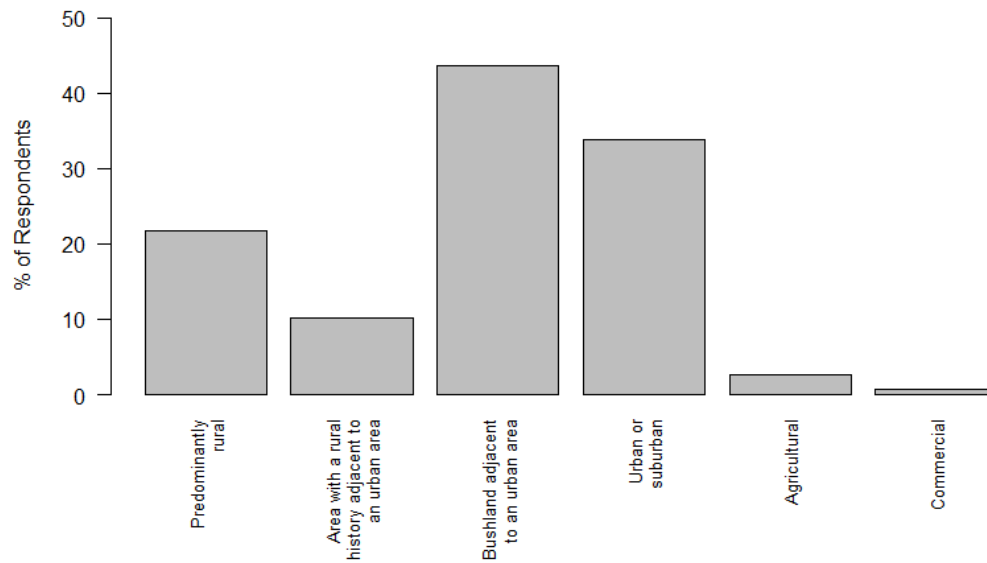


Figure 8 Context of the respondent's property in the broader landscape(Q17).

## Local area context (Q. 18)

A total of 563 respondents ticked at least one of the answers describing their local area. The majority of respondents chose the description of their local area: "Urban area surrounded by bushland" (347, 62%) (Figure 9). The next most commonly chosen description was "Predominantly rural" (127, 23%). Other than "Commercial" and "Industrial" areas which have minimal representation amongst respondents (7 and 5 respectively), the remaining categories were all fairly evenly chosen (between 48 and 80 respondents) and were each chosen by less than 15% of respondents.

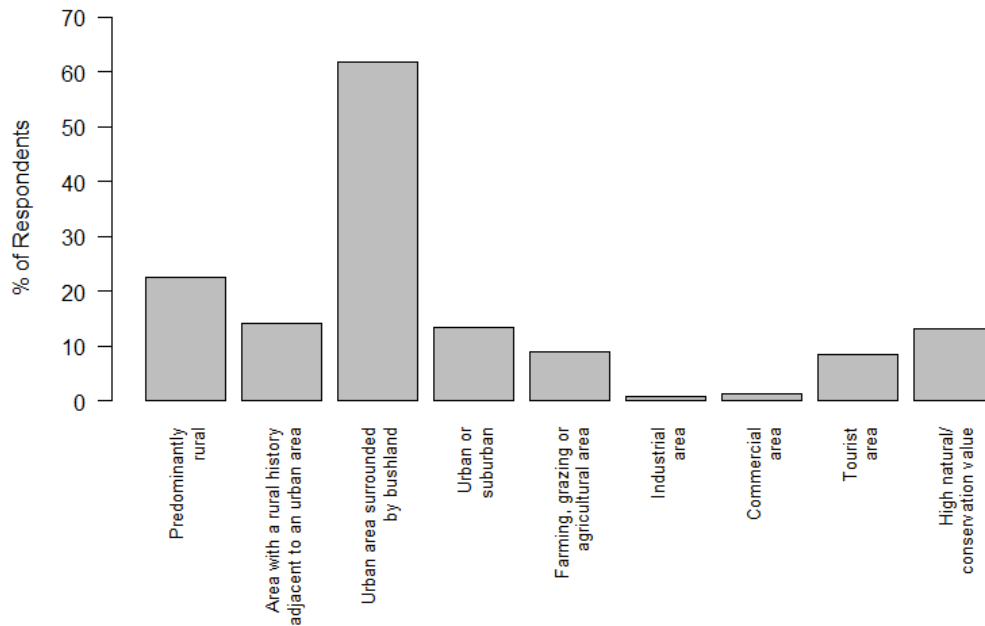


Figure 9 Local area context (Q18).

## Perceived threat from fire (Q. 19)

Respondents were asked to rate the threat of bush fire to their family (total responses = 564); property (total responses = 557); and local area (total responses = 552). Respondents tended to rate the threat to their local area as higher than the threat to their family, with the threat to their property falling somewhere between (Figure 10). More than 50% of the respondents rated the threat to their family as “Medium” or below, with the most commonly selected rating being “Medium”. In contrast less than 35% of respondents rated the threat to their local area as “Medium” or below (or conversely greater than 65% of respondents rated the threat to their local area as “High” or above), with the most commonly select response being “High”. These results highlight a common problem of residents identifying risk elsewhere in the community but failing to recognise it in their own situation, in this case their house.

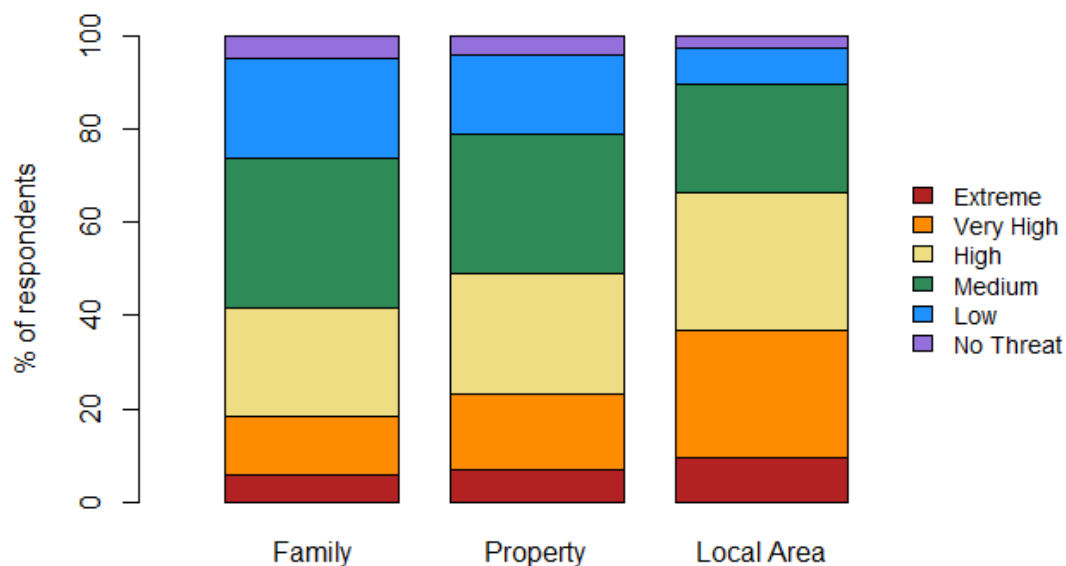


Figure 10 Perceived threat of bush fire to the family, property and local area (Q19).

There is some variation in perceived threat apparent when broken down by the three fire-affected areas (plus Western Sydney - many areas of which were potentially threatened by either the Blue Mountains or the Southern Highlands fires) (Figure 11). The Central Coast / Port Stephens area has higher proportions of respondents indicating that the threat to their family and property was “Medium” or lower (>75%). Conversely, greater proportions of respondents in both the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands regions rated the threat to all three (family, property, and local area) as “High” or above (>40%, >45%, >60%, respectively), than for the other regions. Less than 2% of all respondents from the Blue Mountains region felt there was “No Threat” to their family, property of local area.



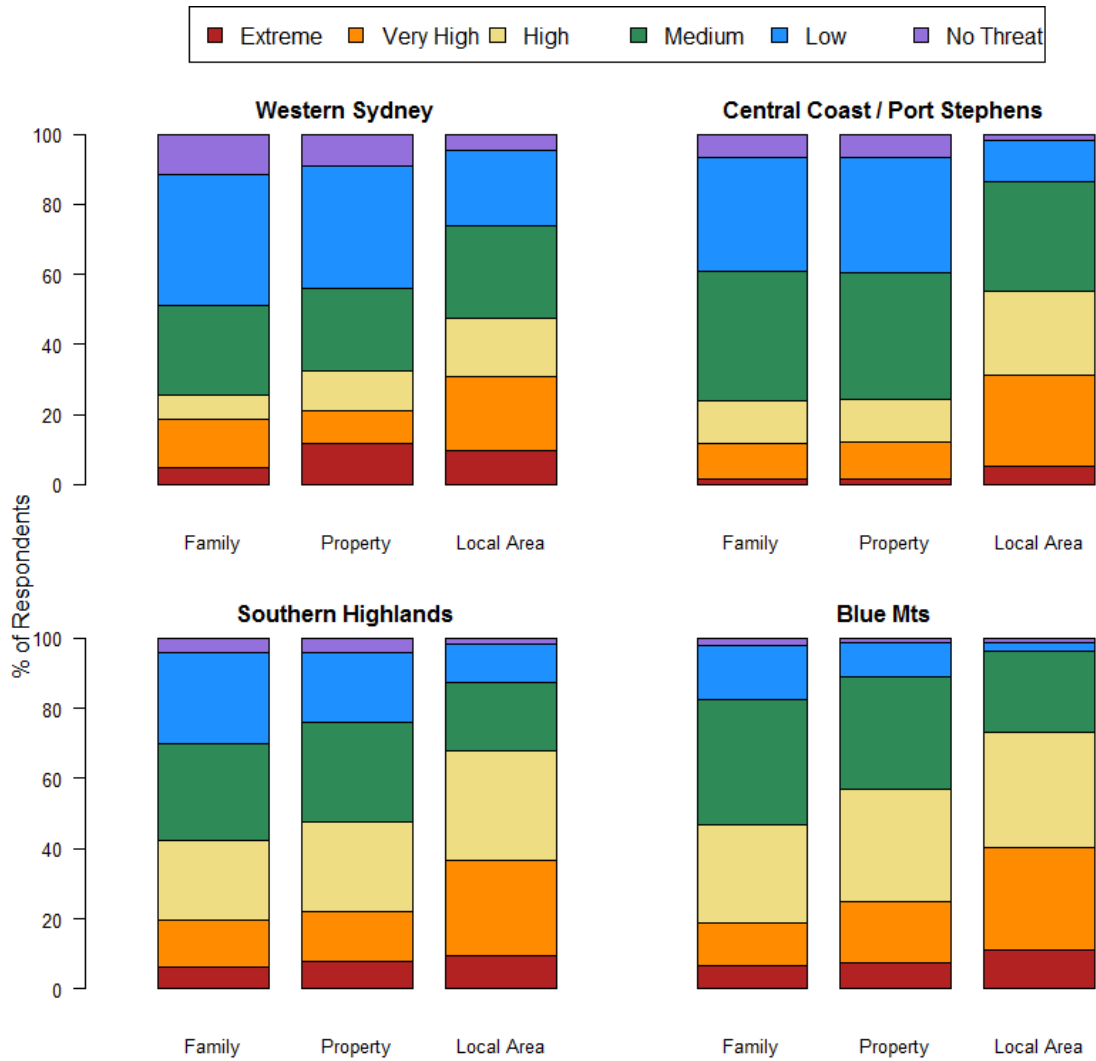


Figure 11 Perceived threat of bush fire to the family, property and local area (Q19) for each of the three fire-affect regions, plus Western Sydney.

### Area values (Q. 20)

When asked to rank the importance of reasons for purchasing and / or moving to their property, the total number of responses ranged between 486 and 412, across 9 different reasons. The most important reason was “Lifestyle”, as this category was chosen as “Very Important” by more respondents (303, 62%) than any other category as well as being chosen as “Not Important” by fewer respondents (29, 6%) than any other category (Figure 12). The categories which had the next highest response as “Very Important” reasons were the lifestyle-related: “Good environment to bring up children in” and “Affordability of housing / cost of living”, which were both chosen as “Very important” by over 200 (>45%) respondents and “Not important” by less than 100 (<18%) respondents. Respondents overwhelmingly rated reasons related to operating a business (whether a farm or commercial, industrial or tourism - based) as “Not important” to their reasons for moving to their property (>95%). Likewise “For work other than above” also had a high response as “Not important” (>250, 59%).

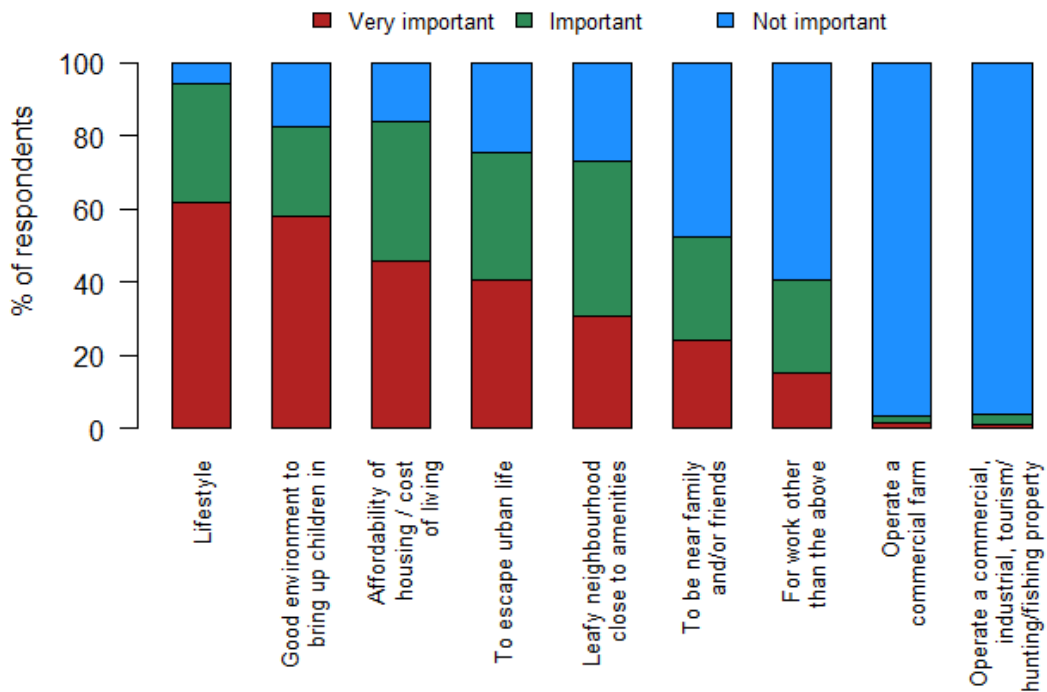


Figure 12 Reasons for purchasing and / or moving to this property (Q20).

### Community values (Q. 21)

Of the 546 respondents that answered the question asking them about their community, the majority (323, 59%) indicated that their community could be described as “People in the area generally get along and talk to one another” (Table 6). Just over 20% (112) felt their community could be described as “People in the area regularly socialise and are friends”, with 13% (71) describing their community as “People in the area generally know but don’t talk to each other”. The least common community description was “There is not much interaction between people”, with less than 10% (40) of respondents choosing this as a description of their community.

Table 6 Responses to “What best describes the local community?” (Q21).

Local community description	Number	Percentage
People in the area regularly socialise and are friends	112	20.5%
People in the area generally get along and talk to one another	323	59.2%
People in the area generally know but don't talk to each other	71	13.0%
There is not much interaction between people	40	7.3%

When broken down by the three fire-affected areas (plus Western Sydney - many areas of which were potentially threatened by either the Blue Mountains or the Southern Highlands fires), some regional variation becomes apparent (Figure 13). A greater proportion of respondents from the Central Coast / Port Stephens area felt that “People in the area generally get along and talk to one another” (75%), whilst a greater proportion of respondents from the Blue Mountains region felt that “People in the area regularly socialise and are friends” (28%) as compared to the other regions. There was a higher proportion of respondents from the Central Coast / Port Stephens region that answered “There is not much interaction between people” (13%) than for the other regions.

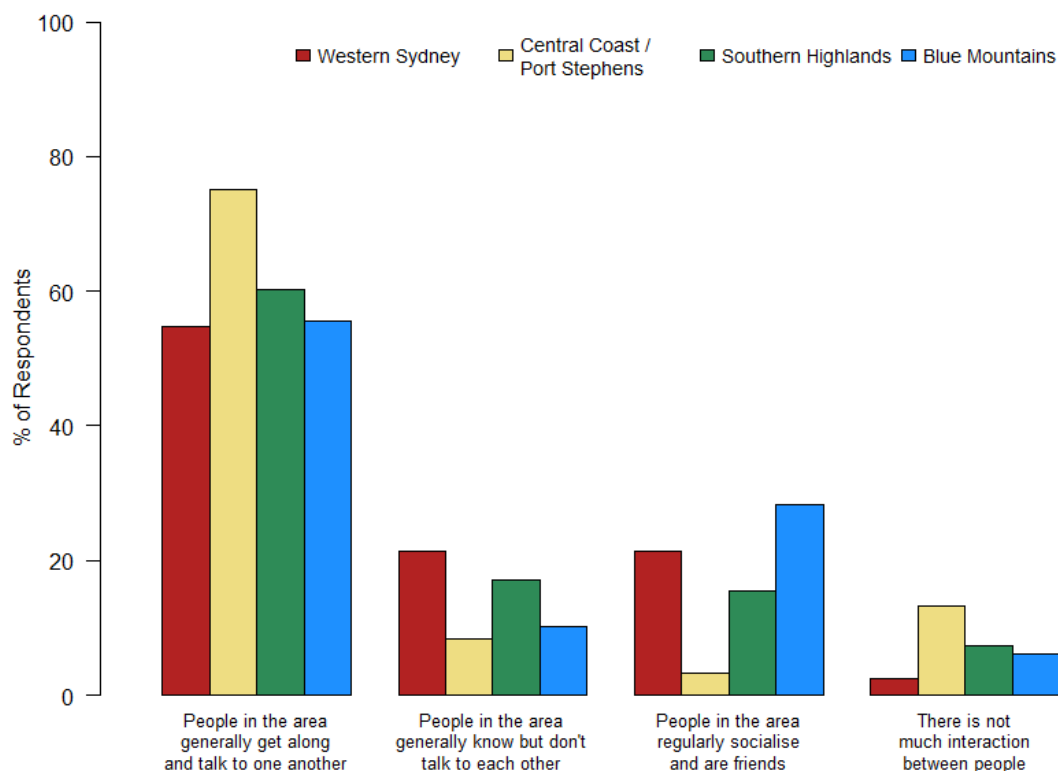


Figure 13 Responses to “What best describes the local community?” (Q21) by fire-affected region.

## PETS AND LIVESTOCK

Of the 550 respondents who answered this question, the majority (403, 73%) indicated that they do have pets, poultry or livestock on their property. When broken down into types and numbers, the most common response was one or two dogs (142, 109 respectively) or one cat (104). The next most common type of pet was chickens which were listed as being at 106 properties.

## PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF BUSH FIRE

A total of 542 respondents answered the question about when their local area last experienced bush fire. The most common response (196, 36% of those that answered) was “Within the last 12 months”. Similarly when asked when they personally last experienced bush fire respondents overwhelmingly (260, 48%) chose “Within the last 12 months” (Figure 14). This suggests that many respondents may have misread the instructions that asked respondents about their experience with bush fire before September 2013.

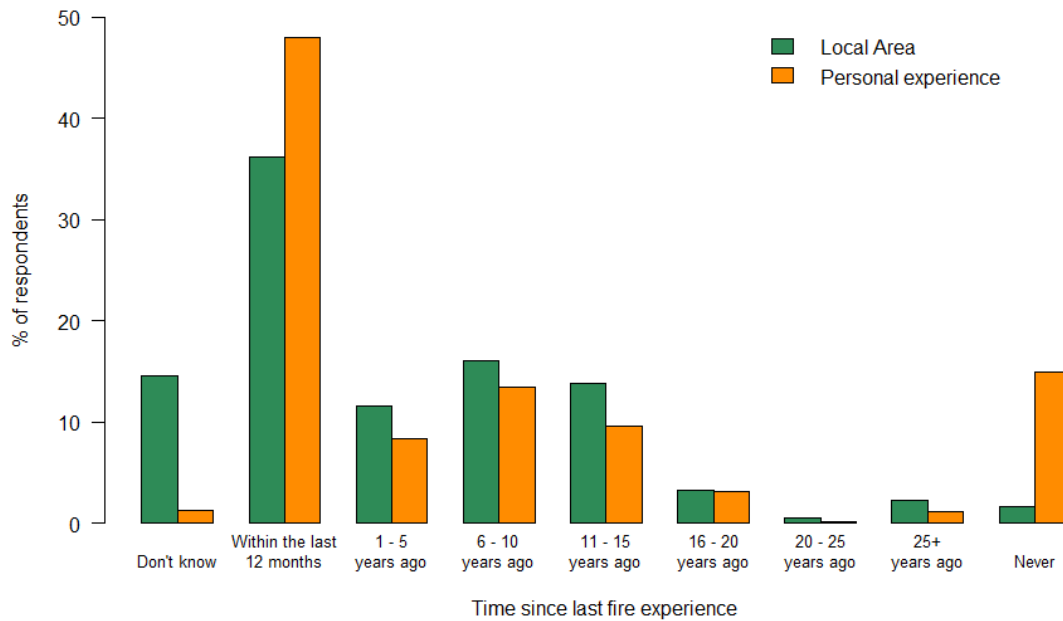


Figure 14 Experience with bush fire personally and for their local area (Q24 & 25).

## Experience with bush fire (Q. 26)

A total of 545 respondents ticked at least one of the answers describing the type of direct personal experience they had with bush fire. This was a multi-tick question where respondents could select more than one category. The category that was ticked by the most respondents was “I have smelled or seen bushfire smoke” (427, 78%), closely followed by “I have seen bushfire burning” (411, 75%) (Figure 15). The third most commonly chosen category was “I have visited an area recently burnt by bushfire” (353, 65%). The next most commonly chosen categories that were chosen by between 100 – 200 respondents form a “middle group” that all reflect a closer direct experience with bushfire: “I have left early or evacuated due to bushfire” (201, 37%); “I am/have been a volunteer fire fighter” (171, 31%); “I have seen bushfire burning houses” (170, 31%); “I have defended my own property” (135, 25%); “I have defended neighbouring property” (96, 18%). The less frequently chosen group of categories (all chosen by less than 100 respondents) reflect the two extremes of: no direct experience of bush fire (“I have seen fire on television ONLY” (18, 3%) and “No experience” (13, 2%)); or very close and / or personal experience with bush fire: “My property (other than house) has been burnt” (69, 13%); “My home has been damaged” (23, 4%); “I am/have been a paid fire fighter” (15, 3%); “My home has been destroyed” (11, 2%).

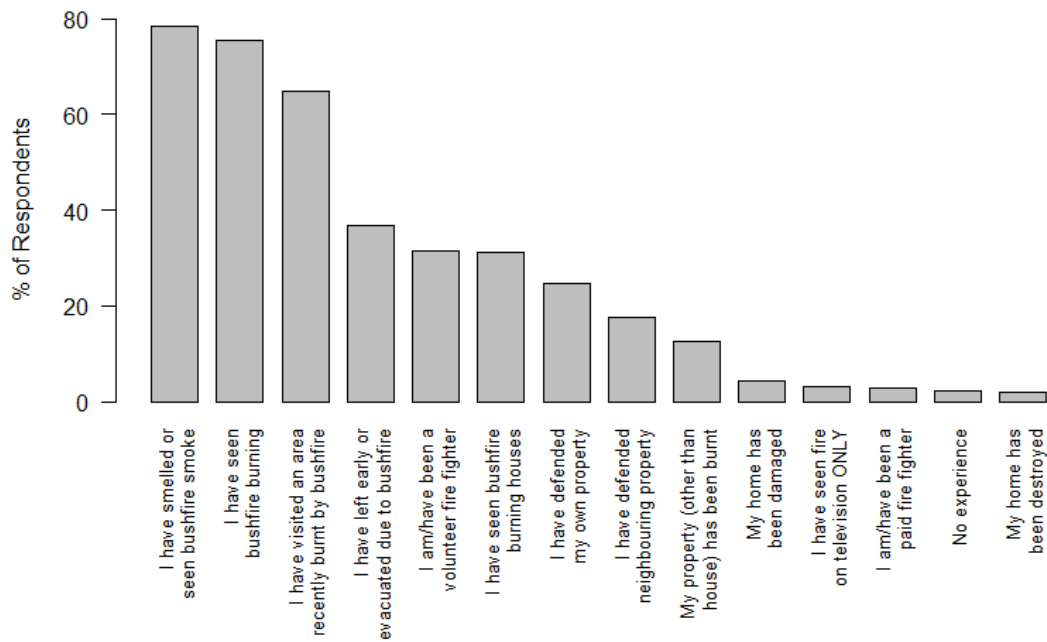


Figure 15 Type of direct personal experience that respondents have had with bush fire (Q26).

## Previous defence (Q. 27)

The majority of respondents who had previously attempted to defend a property from bush fire (187) indicated that the outcome had been a “Saved house (no damage)” (130, 70%) (Figure 16). The other categories, which all had low response numbers (<15%), were: “House saved, but outbuildings lost” (28, 15%); “Minor damage to the house” (15, 8%); “House lost to the bush fire” (13, 7%); “Major damage to the house” (1, 0.5%).

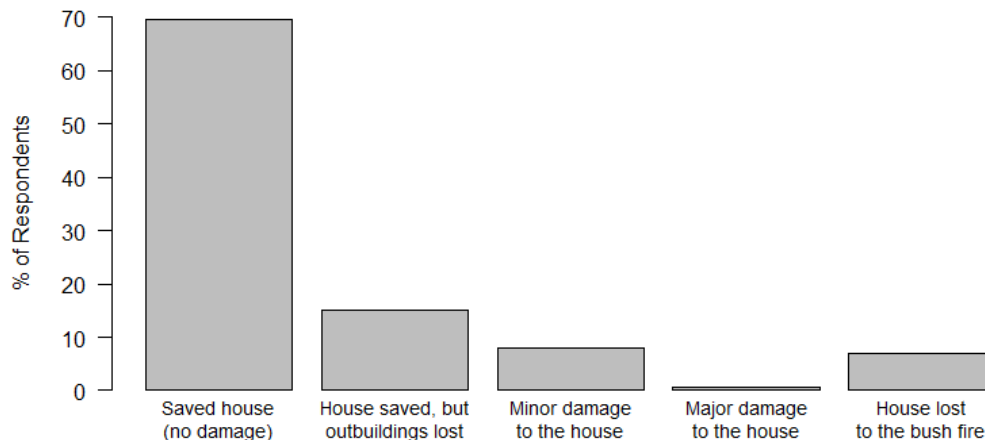


Figure 16 Outcome for respondents who had experience defending property from bush fire (Q27).

## Membership of fire agencies (Q. 28)

A high number of respondents indicated that they were current members of the NSW Rural Fire Service (166, 31% of all respondents) (Table 7). A smaller number of respondents were current members of Community Fire Units (12, 3%) or Fire and Rescue NSW (5, 1%).

Table 7 Experience as member of a NSW fire-related organisation (Q28).

	Current	Previous	No	TOTAL
NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)	166 (31%)	40 (7%)	333 (62)	539
Community Fire Unit	12 (3%)	7 (2%)	413 (95%)	432
Fire & Rescue NSW	5 (1%)	3 (1%)	422 (98%)	430

## Overview of the participants

The participants of the survey represent a reasonable cross section of the communities that were exposed to the bush fires in October 2013. There is a gender bias towards females however this is a common result in online surveys. Similarly, the cross section of properties inhabited by the participants is consistent with expectations for the study areas.

Experience with fire for the residents is relatively high when compared to more general population surveys. A large number of the participants have been paid or volunteer members of fire management agencies and many have first-hand experience with bush fires. This result probably reflects the nature of the environment the participants live in, as well as their interest in the issue of bush fire management. Results of the latter sections of the survey should be treated as best case scenario, as we are dealing with a more aware section of the community.

## PREPARING FOR BUSH FIRE

### Insurance (Q. 29)

Approximately 500 people responded to the insurance categories relating to personal insurance (home = 519 respondents; contents = 520 respondents; vehicles = 513 respondents) and 400 to those relating to commercial features (farms = 407 respondents; business = 408 respondents). The majority of respondents (>85%) indicated that they are fully insured for House, Contents and Vehicles (Figure 17). A higher number of respondents indicated that they were not insured for Contents (39, 8%) than for House (18, 3%) and Vehicles (22, 4%). In regards to Farm and Business insurance, there was a very high number of “Not applicable” responses (>85%), leaving a very small number of responses (<50). In both cases the “Fully insured” category was chosen by only slightly more respondents (17, 4% for Farm and 23, 6% for Business) than the “Not insured” category (15, 4% for Farm and 18, 4% for Business).

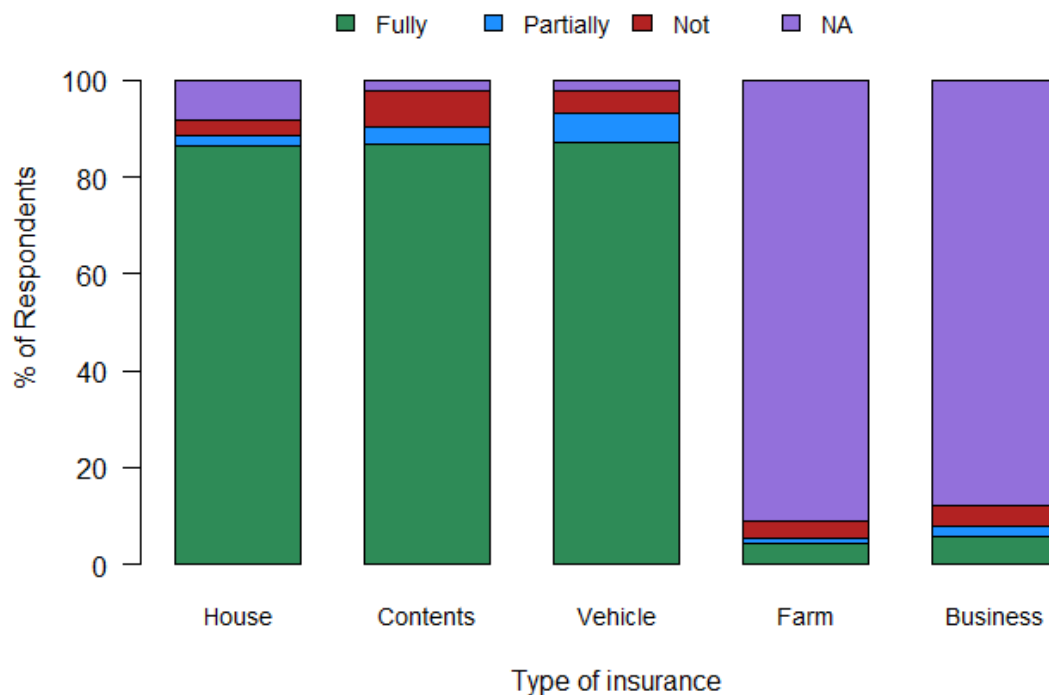


Figure 17 Respondents' level of insurance cover for fire (Q29).

### Preparatory actions (Q. 30)

Respondents were asked about what actions they had done, or intended to do, to prepare their property for bush fire. The survey allowed a response to each of the large number of actions (16) supplied, with an additional free-text “Other” option. The data reported here are expressed as a percentage of those who responded to that particular action. The total number of responses to the individual actions ranged between 522 and 436. The most common actions that had been undertaken were “Discussed bush fire risk with family or others in the house” (449, 89%) and “Had cleared the gutters” (448, 86%). These were closely followed by: “Had a clear space around the house” (429, 84%); and “Having a plan in mind - just knowing what to do” (426, 87%) (Table 8). The least common actions that had been done were: “Installed

a bushfire sprinkler system” (61, 14%); and “Got involved with a Community Fire Unit in the street” (53, 12%).

It is interesting to note that whilst the actions relating to a written and practiced bush fire survival plan (“Wrote a Bush Fire Survival Plan” and “Practiced the Bush Fire Survival Plan”) fell somewhere in the middle of the “Had done” range, the numbers of respondents that felt these two actions were unnecessary were relatively high (>100), as were those who “Intended to” (also >100).

Table 8 Survey response numbers for actions relating to property preparation for bush fire (Q30).

Action	Had done	Intended to	Felt unnecessary	Not considered	TOTAL
Discussed bush fire risk with family or others in the house	449, 89%	21, 4%	14, 3%	20, 4%	504
Had cleared the gutters	448, 86%	57, 11%	7, 1%	10, 2%	522
Had a clear space around the house	429, 84%	42, 8%	13, 3%	24, 5%	508
Having a plan in mind - just knowing what to do	426, 87%	37, 8%	14, 3%	11, 2%	488
Had a safe destination and evacuation route mapped out	398, 80%	38, 8%	36, 7%	26, 5%	498
Installed the Fires Near Me app on their phone or tablet	373, 76%	16, 3%	22, 4%	79, 16%	490
Obtained the Bush Fire Survival Plan kit from NSW RFS	332, 68%	55, 11%	56, 11%	45, 9%	488
Discussed fire risk with neighbours	332, 66%	41, 8%	58, 12%	69, 14%	500
Had protective clothing	324, 67%	42, 9%	33, 7%	85, 18%	484
Had a "go" kit ready to leave with	323, 65%	73, 15%	44, 9%	58, 12%	498
Had a water supply independent of the mains	224, 47%	49, 10%	50, 10%	155, 32%	478
Wrote a Bush Fire Survival Plan	205, 43%	121, 26%	103, 22%	43, 9%	472
Practiced the Bush Fire Survival Plan	167, 36%	116, 25%	120, 26%	62, 13%	465
Had a power supply independent of the mains (e.g. generator or solar cells)	126, 27%	61, 13%	69, 15%	206, 45%	462
Installed a bushfire sprinkler system	61, 14%	66, 15%	119, 27%	197, 44%	443
Got involved with a Community Fire Unit in the street	53, 12%	49, 11%	87, 20%	247, 57%	436

Compared to other questions a large number (63) of people entered information about their preparation actions in the “Other” free-text box. A large number of these responses were quite lengthy, so the full text has been supplied in Appendix C.



## BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

A total of 495 respondents ticked at least one of the options regarding whether they had received a RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan and where they got it from. The most common means of receiving a Bush Fire Survival Plan was through respondents downloading it from the website (187, 38%) (Figure 18). This was followed by those that received it "From fire station or Fire Control Centre" (153, 31%) and "At community meetings" (80, 16%). A group of 125 (25%) respondents said they had not seen or received a Bush Fire Survival Plan. Thirty nine people entered into the free-text "Other" box and these generally fell into a number of categories. These were those who received the Bush Fire Survival Plan through the mail (e.g. "Delivered to my house", "letterbox drop", "mail", "post"), at community events ( e.g. "fetes, markets", "Tocal Field Day", "Election day stall..."), and from local businesses (e.g. "local café").

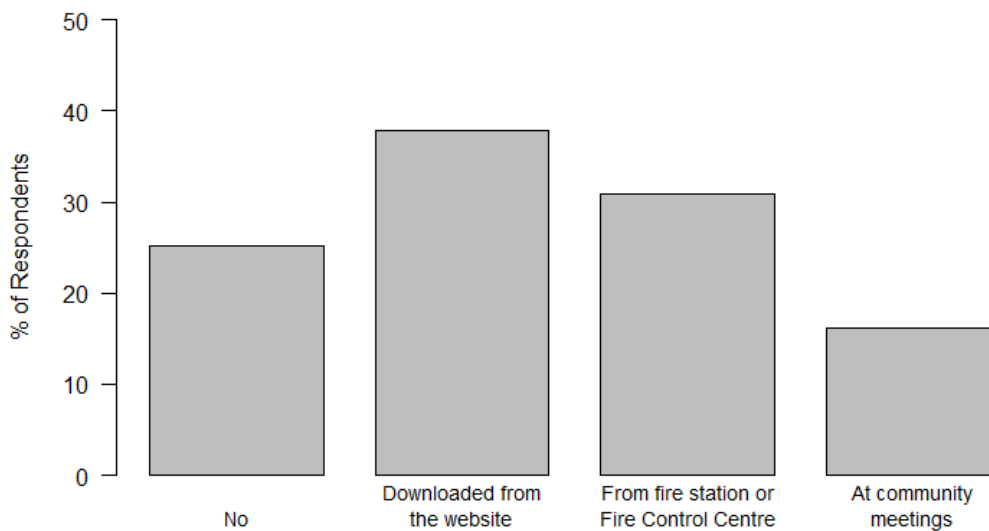


Figure 18 Response for survey question asking respondents whether they have received the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan document and where they got it from (Q31).

### Plan of action (Q. 32 & 33)

A total of 527 respondents answered the question about whether they had a plan of what to do in the event of a bush fire. The majority of respondents said they had a mental plan (364, 69%) (Figure 19). Nearly 20% said that they had a written plan (102), whilst the remainder indicated they had no plan (61, 12%). This is consistent with previous work in the area.

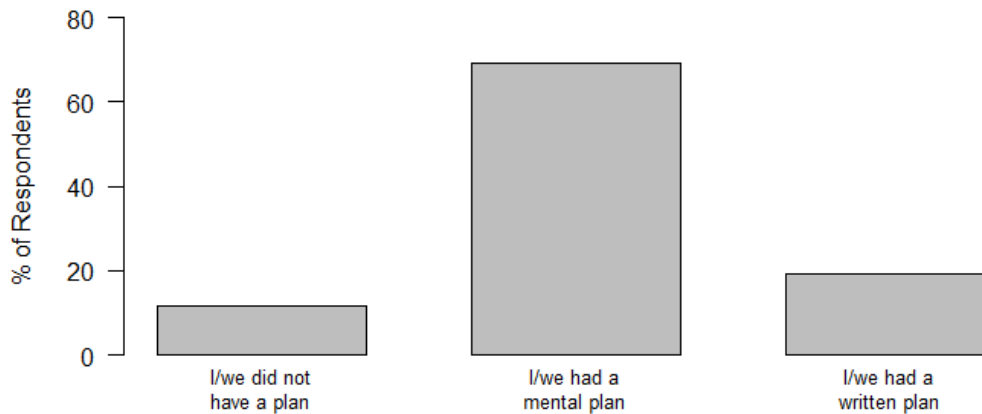


Figure 19 Survey response numbers for whether respondents had a plan in the event of bush fire (Q32).

Respondents were then asked to choose a description from a list that best describes their plan in the event of a bush fire. A total of 459 respondents answered this question, which corresponds to the combined number of respondents who answered they had a written or mental plan in the previous question. Of those that answered, the largest group said that “Some household members leave early, others stay and defend” (167, 36%), closely followed by those that chose “Whole family/household leaves early” (135, 29%) (Figure 20). Nearly 20% of respondents to this question said they would “Wait and see how bad it is then decide” (88) and 13% said their household plan was “All stay and defend” (58). Few respondent said they had “No concrete plan” (9, 2%), and even fewer said they would “Shelter in place (passively)” (2, <1%).

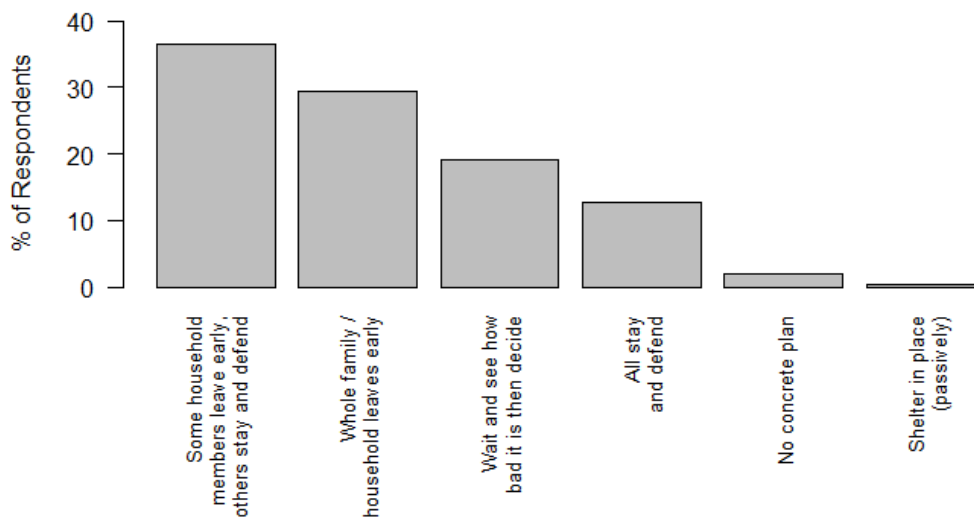


Figure 20 Survey response numbers for description of household's plan (Q33).

## Decision to make a plan (Q. 34)

A total of 379 respondents ticked at least one of the provided reasons for deciding to make a plan. The most commonly chosen reason for making a plan was "Concern about bush fire risk" (319, 84%) (Figure 21). The next most common reason was "advice from RFS in the community" (171, 45%). The remaining reasons, which were each chosen by less than 100 respondents, were (in decreasing popularity): "Advice from RFS social media Twitter/Facebook" (90, 24%); "Ads on TV" (72, 19%); "Advice from family" (34, 9%); "Advice from friends" (15, 4%); and "Response to a school activity" (6, 2%).

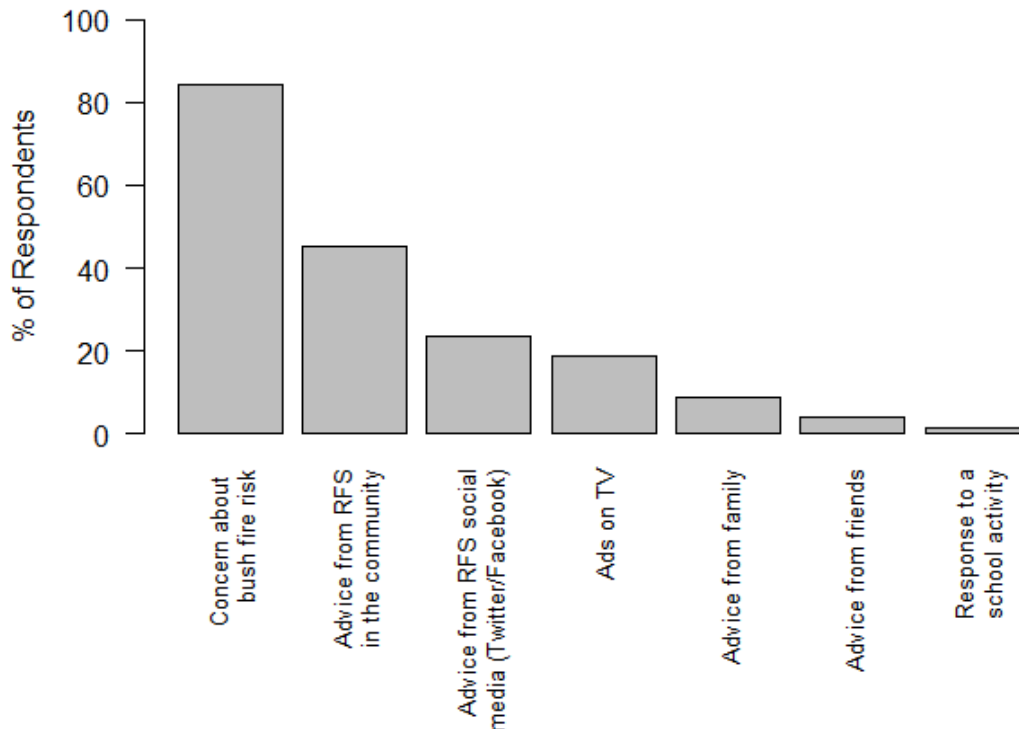


Figure 21 Motivation to make a plan (Q34).

Many respondents (71) chose to provide a response in the free-text "Other" option. As this forms a lengthy list it is provided in Appendix C. Some common motivators were apparent through the repetition of a number of common themes:

- being an RFS member ("As a member of the RFS - always knew importance of a plan", "We are both volunteers, it is automatic response", "I'm an RFS member and not a hypocrite [SIC]"), in particular being a part of community education ("Being a member of community engagement team", "Practice what we preach");
- being a long term resident and "just knowing" that's what you do ("grew up in area... always had one", "have lived in the mountains for 25 years and been through 4 fires, you just know what to do", "Raised here. Part of growing up we have all experienced fires");
- family culture ("Family at same address for 90 years. Continued our own successful [SIC] defence and plans for this time", "Parents grew up here. Its part of our life", "COMMON SENSE PASSED DOWN THRU GENERATIONS"[SIC]);
- previous experience of fire ("Being caught up in a fire", "formed based on xmas 2001 experience", "Previous experience (Boxing Day 2001 - Warrimoo)", "Previous experience with fires in the local area, so pre-existing fire plan in place", "Years of living in the mountains - 68, 77, 94, 2001 fires");

- awareness of living in a high risk area ("*Basic consideration when moving to the area*", "*We live in a high risk area*", "*location to township*");
- advice and training ("*i have done bush fore Awareness course*", "*Advice from the Victorian CFA*", "*Advice of Twitter and Facebook by other user (ie not the RFS)*");
- concern about health and mobility of family members ("*My husband has motor Neurone disease so we need to be organised*", "*Need to update regularly depending on changing conditions and family members state of health*", "*Lung problems in the older members. A brass musician who would lose his career if he wrecked his lungs*"); and
- Common sense ("*sensible thing to do!*").

## Development of the plan (Q. 35 & 36)

A total of 451 respondents answered the question "Who initiated the development of the plan?". The most common response was that it was a "Household decision" (179, 37%) (Figure 22). More female adults initiated development of the plan (147, 33%) than males (106, 24%), whilst very few respondents said that a child initiated the plan development (2, <1%). A small group of respondents (17, 4%) said they couldn't recall who initiated the development of their plan.

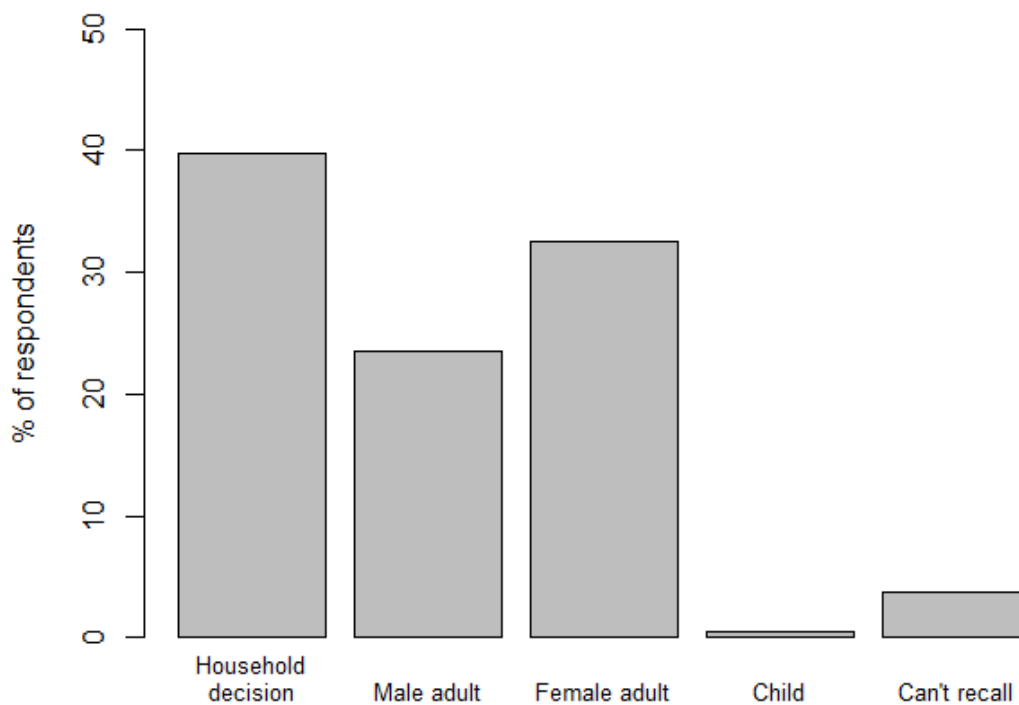


Figure 22 Who initiated the development of the plan? (Q35).

When asked what their main concerns in developing a plan were, a total of 454 respondents ticked at least one of the options provided. The vast majority of respondents chose "Protecting self / family" as at least one of their main concerns (432, 95%) (Figure 23). There was a significant gap between this response and the next most commonly chosen concern, "Protecting pets" (239, 60%). The next most commonly chosen concerns, in decreasing order were: "Loss of property or home" (239, 53%); "Knew road would be cut off" (160, 35%); "Knew road would be blocked by traffic" (151, 33%); "Had children in their care" (121, 27%). Listed concerns which were chosen by less than 100 respondents were: "Asthmatic in household" (62, 14%); "Did not have home prepared" (38, 8%); "Loss of stock" (25, 6%); "Had to care for frail/elderly in our home" (21, 5%); "Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home" (14, 3%).

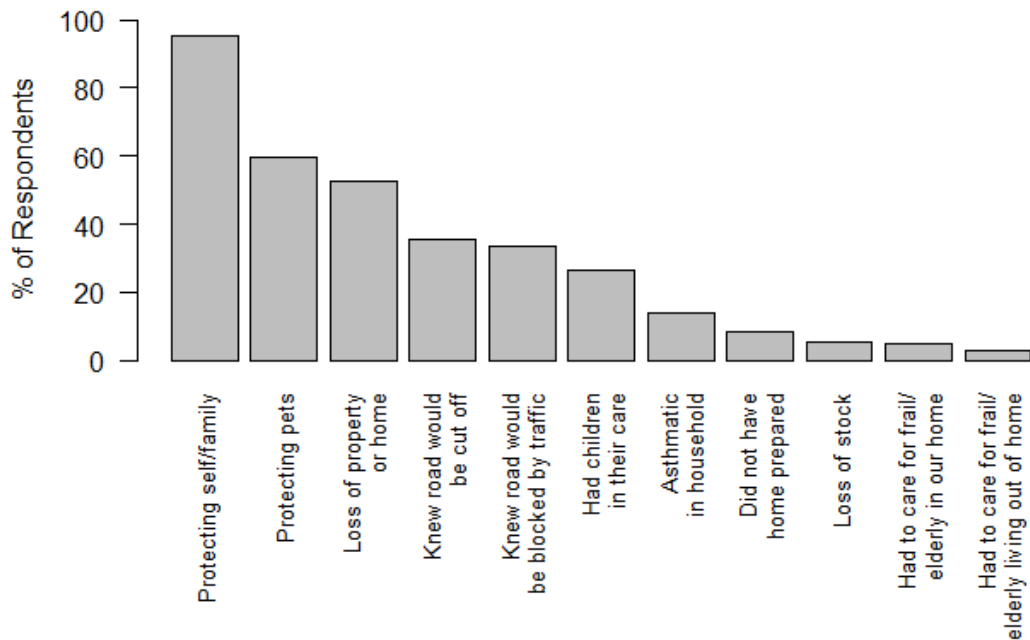


Figure 23 Main concerns in developing a plan (Q36).

A number of respondents (40) chose to provide further detail in the free-text "Other" option. Full details of these responses are given in Appendix C. A number of themes emerged that were additions to or variations on the provided list, including:

- concern about the inherent vulnerability of their house ("*100 year old house, potentially vulnerable...*", "*Home is old, needs maintenance and not easily defended.*", "*House deemed unsavable in event of fire by SES*");
- being disabled themselves ("*disability leaves me with no other real choice, and this is not in your list*", "*disabled - wheelchair user with no vehicle*", "*One adult disabled - multiple sclerosis. One adult pregnant.*");
- concern about family / friends outside their home ("*Had to consider friend (32) incomplete quadriplegic living on other side of town*");
- knowing it would be unlikely they would be there ("*Knew we wouldn't be home as we will be on a fire truck somewhere*", "*I could be at work in Sydney when fire broke out (which, in the event, I was and was cut off from my home and cats)*", "*As RFS members most if not all would not be at home*");
- concerns about roads and utilities ("*Knew from experience roads can be cut off and utilities can be restricted or fail*", "*we have only one road in and out*", "*knew there would be loss of power*");
- concerns about a lack of RFS resources to support them ("*lack of support from RFS over the years. Getting older.*", "*the likely behaviour of the NSW RFS*", "*Small street in bushland very likely to be inaccessible to emergency crews in a fire*", "*not much point hanging around firefighters will do what they can*");

### Was the plan based on the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan? (Q.37 & 38)

When asked whether their plan was based on the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan, the majority (271, 62%) of respondents who answered this question (436) said it was. Respondents were then asked what information they used to prepare their plan. The most popular response to this question was "Common sense" (337, 77%) (Figure 24). Two NSW RFS publications: "Bush Fire Survival Plan booklet" (235, 54%);

and “Prepare Your Property Checklist” (175, 40%) were the next most popular sources of information, followed by “Information from family and friends” (113, 26%) and “NSW RFS Household Assessment Tool” (112, 26%). A smaller number chose “Information in the media” (78, 18%), whilst very few people chose “None of the above” (6, 1%).

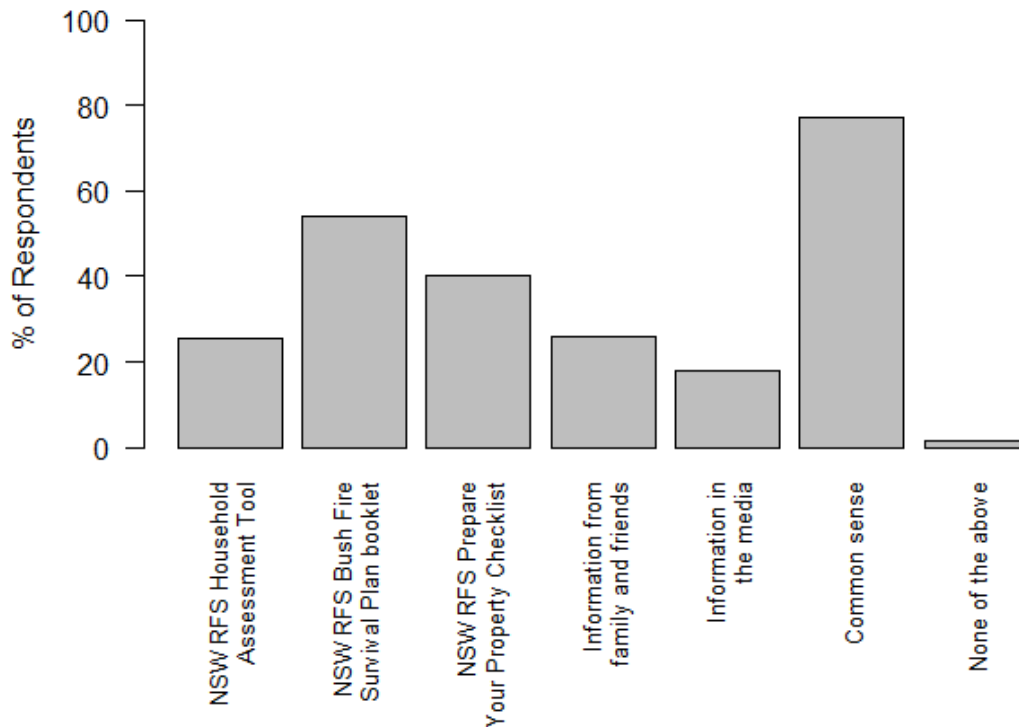


Figure 24 Information used to prepare the plan (Q. 38)

A number of respondents (53) chose to provide further detail in the free-text “Other” option. Full details of these responses are given in Appendix C. A number of themes emerged that were additions to or variations on the provided list, including:

- personal knowledge / experience (“decades on knowledge”, “Also my years of experience”, “20 years RFS experience”, “Own experience and knowledge 34 years as a Volunteer”, “Training and experience with NSW and WA Forestry, ”);
- advice from RFS personnel (“I have discussed options with many people including members of RFS”, “advice from local RFS”, “Talking to local RFS”); and
- the internet (“Information from Twitter and Facebook (ie not RFS)”, “Winmalee RFS on Twitter/Facebook”, “Google maps”).

## Details of the plan (Q. 39)

A total of 451 respondents provided an answer to at least one aspect of the details of their plan. The vast majority of respondents (400, 90%) said that their plan did “Get discussed by the household” (Figure 25). Other details in which the majority of respondents replied in the positive were: “Identify a place of last resort?” (321, 74%); “Consider a fire starting mid-week?” (307, 71%); “Make provision for pets?” (304, 69%); and “Include a backup plan?” (264, 60%). The majority of respondents indicated that their plan did not “Differ between members of the household?” (282, 66%). Just below 50% of respondents indicated that their plan did “Make provision for children?” (205, 49%). However when you remove those that responded “N/A” (i.e. presumably didn’t have children), this jumped to 80%. Likewise, only 21% of respondents indicated that their plan did “Make provision for adults that are elderly and immobile?”, however when those that responded “N/A” are removed it jumps to 62% (and it could be argued that a number of the respondents that clicked on “No” may have done so because their plan simply did not consider the elderly or immobile because they didn’t need to). Just over 25% of respondents indicated that their plan did “Get practiced or rehearsed?” (122, 28%).

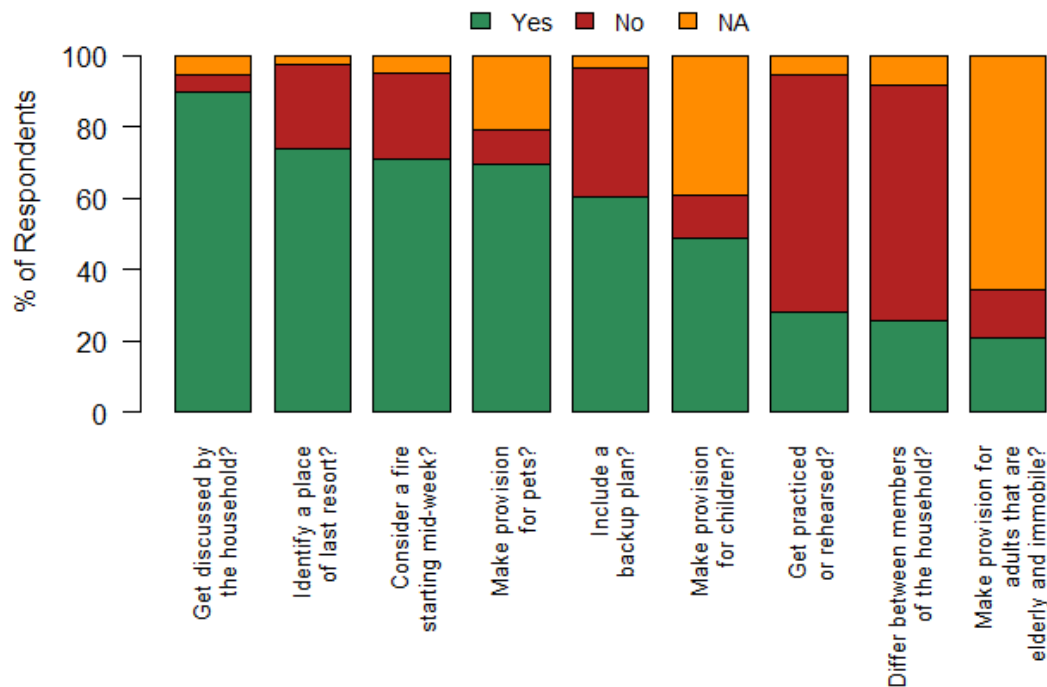


Figure 25 Detail of respondents bush fire plan (Q39).

## Planning for bush fires

Many of the participants had considered their actions in the case of a bush fire, but these actions were not in the form of a written plan. In fact, the majority of participants did not have a written plan and almost 25% felt having a plan was unnecessary. Research has shown that preparing a bush fire survival plan prior to the fire season is vital as it guides the decision making processes on the day(s) of a fire (Bushnell *et al.*, 2007; O’Neill and Handmer, 2012). A correctly prepared plan must identify actions and assign roles to all members of the household regardless of whether they are staying to defend or leaving early (Eriksen, 2013). The plan should also consider multiple contingencies due to the highly variable nature of bush fire wildfire, such as fallen trees or power lines resulting in closure of roads used to leave (Matthew *et al.*, 2004), fires approaching the property from an unexpected direction, failure of equipment such as water pumps and hoses, and resident(s) not being at home when the fire starts (O’Neill and Handmer, 2012; Whittaker *et al.*, 2013).

A key component of surviving a bush fire is having an identified means of exiting the property and travelling to places of last resort safely (Tibbits and Whittaker, 2007). Should the fire become unmanageable for the resident(s) to attempt to defend their house or shelter in it while the fire front passes a place of last resort is an alternate location that is safe for the resident(s) to shelter. The majority of respondents had identified a place to evacuate to and a route, however the survey was unable to ascertain whether the respondents had identified multiple options.

The majority of people had used the NSW RFS official material to prepare their Bush Fire Survival Plan. Participants generally reported getting this information through active searching either through the NSW RFS official website or through the local fire station. A large number of people also reported having never seen or received the Bush Fire Survival Plan. Given the importance of the plan for the survival of people and property, this highlights an area of concern.

Of those that did prepare a Bush Fire Survival Plan, the results were extremely positive. Many discussed the plan within the household, identified a place of last resort, considered a fire starting mid-week and included a backup plan. This suggests that when people are preparing a plan they are extending beyond the basic first response.



## INFORMATION RECEIVED BEFORE THE FIRE

A total of 507 respondents ticked at least one of the answers when asked about where they recalled receiving information about preparing for bush fires. The largest number of respondents reported "Television" (330, 65%) (Figure 26). "Local Volunteers" (241, 48%) and "Social Media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)" (219, 43%) were also indicated by high numbers of respondents. The information sources that were chosen by between 100 and 200 respondents were (in decreasing order): "Newspaper" (157, 31%); "Radio" (130, 2%); "Letterbox drops" (104, 21%); and "Local council" (103, 20%). Only 50 respondents (10%) indicated that they did not recall receiving information about preparing for bush fires ("None").

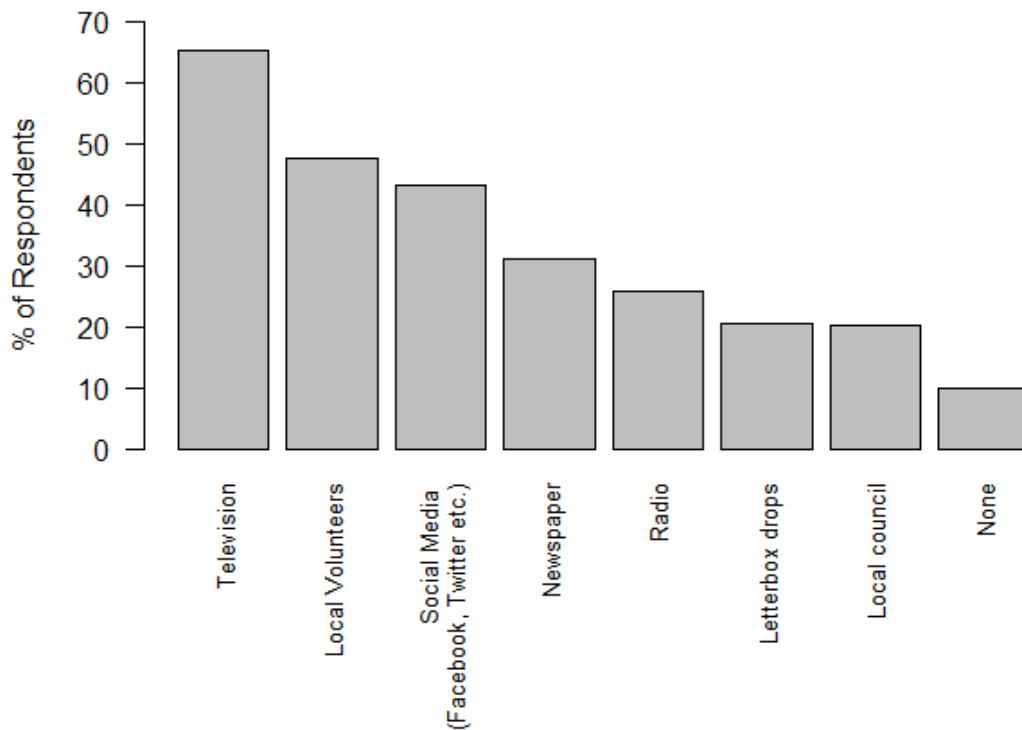


Figure 26 Source of information about preparing for bush fires (Q40).

## Terminology (Q. 41)

A total of 508 respondents ticked at least one of the listed information sources and terminology related to bush fire. Respondents seemed familiar with all the provided sources of information and terms, with all categories receiving between 288 and 483 “ticks” (Figure 27). “Total Fire Bans” received the most ticks (483, 95%), closely followed by: “Watch and Act” (454, 89%); “Fire Danger Ratings” (450, 89%); “Prepare, Act, Survive” (435, 86%); “Bush fire Alert Levels” (435, 86%); “Sirens on fire trucks” (433, 85%); Bush Fire Survival Plan” (412, 81%); and “Emergency Warning” (409, 81%). The next bunch of categories all received between 200 and 300 “ticks”: “Apps like Fires Near Me app” (384, 76%); “Advertising on TV, radio, newspapers, billboards” (373, 73%); “RFS Fire Danger Map” (367, 72%); “Radio news reports” (366, 72%); “Roadside danger signs” (360, 71%); and “Information about what to do around the home” (350, 69%). There is a drop down to the next category: “Shelter in Place” with 288 (57%) “ticks”, whilst “None of the above” only received 5 (1%).

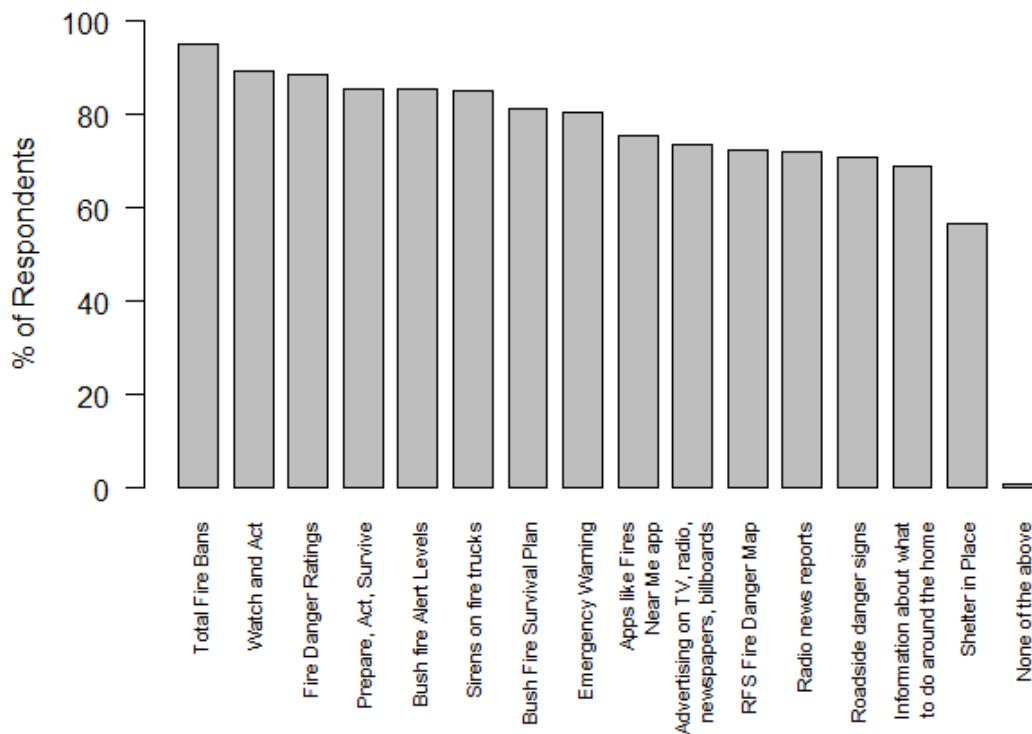


Figure 27 Familiarity with bush fire related terms and sources of information (Q41).

Residents in the survey have a generally high level of understanding of the terminology surrounding fire management in NSW, with the majority of participants recognising the key phrases used by the NSW RFS (Figure 27). A broad range of information sources have been identified including television, volunteers and social media (Figure 26). It should be noted that although these have been identified as conduits of information, the questions did not determine the extent to which the information was adopted. Previous research has suggested that passive education approaches, such as television, have a lower adaptation rate than more active approaches of community engagement (Jakes *et al.*, 2007).

## NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES

A total of 510 respondents answered the question asking them "Do you know the term "Neighbourhood Safer Place"?". The majority (324, 64%) said they did, whilst 186 (36%) said they didn't. Of the 324 who were familiar with the term, 194 (60%) said they had one locally, whilst a nearly equal number said there wasn't (61, 19%) or that they were unsure (68, 21%) (Table 9).

Table 9 Response numbers to questions about Neighbourhood Safer Places (Q42 & 43).

Do you know the term "Neighbourhood Safer Place"			Do you have one locally?		
<b>Yes</b>	324	64%	<b>Yes</b>	194	60%
			<b>No</b>	61	19%
			<b>Unsure</b>	68	21%
<b>No</b>	186	36%			

When asked "Where is it?" (the neighbourhood safer place), 200 respondents entered something in the free-text box. These are all listed in Appendix C and range from the very general (e.g. "Local hotel", "local oval", "local school", "Local shops", "local school and/or sports oval") through to very specific ("Blue Mountains City Church, Rusden Road Mount Riverview", "adjacent to Penrose RFB Building, Kareela Road, Penrose,") and knowledge of multiple options ("Winifred west park, Welby oval, bunnings car park", "Melrose park, k [SIC] Katoomba public school, BMCC chambers, if it wasn't a building site at the moment Pioneer place"). Some respondents questioned the suitability of their Neighbourhood Safer Place ("Adjacent to Megalong Valley Tea Rooms Peach Tree road Megalong Valley. Depending upon circumstances it is highly likely we would be unable to get there and in fact we would be safer staying put in our local property area.", "Bargo Oval is an assembly place but we had already decided that it was not necessarily safe because it is close to bush and a fire affecting Yanderra could also impact on Bargo", "Gillespie Field. This is impractical, as traffic will block Fox Valley Road/Highway preventing access. We have identified Warrawee Bowling Club as our nearest 'safe' destination.", "Mount Hunter Public School. Although its suitability is dubious. ").

There is clearly confusion about the official term Neighbourhood Safer Place and the application of this. Many people have failed to correctly identify an "official" Neighbourhood Safer Place and instead identify a public location they believe to be safe.

## THE DAYS BEFORE THE FIRE

### Threats (Q. 45)

Respondents were asked to rate the threat of bush fire to their family, property and the local area (each separately) in the days immediately before the fire posed the greatest threat. A total of 497 respondents provided at least one rating. Whilst "Very High" was the most popular threat level chosen for all three targets (family - 105, 21%, property - 115, 23%, and local area - 144, 29%), there was very little variation between the threat levels (Figure 28) except that "No threat" was consistently lower than all the other threat levels across all three targets. More respondents chose "Extreme" for the threat posed to the local community (93, 19%) than for family (64, 13%) and property (63, 13%). Conversely more respondents chose "Medium" or "Low" for the threat posed to their family (Medium - 85, 17%, Low - 92, 19%) and property (Medium - 85, 17%, Low - 88, 18%) than to their local area (Medium - 69, 14%, Low - 59, 12%).

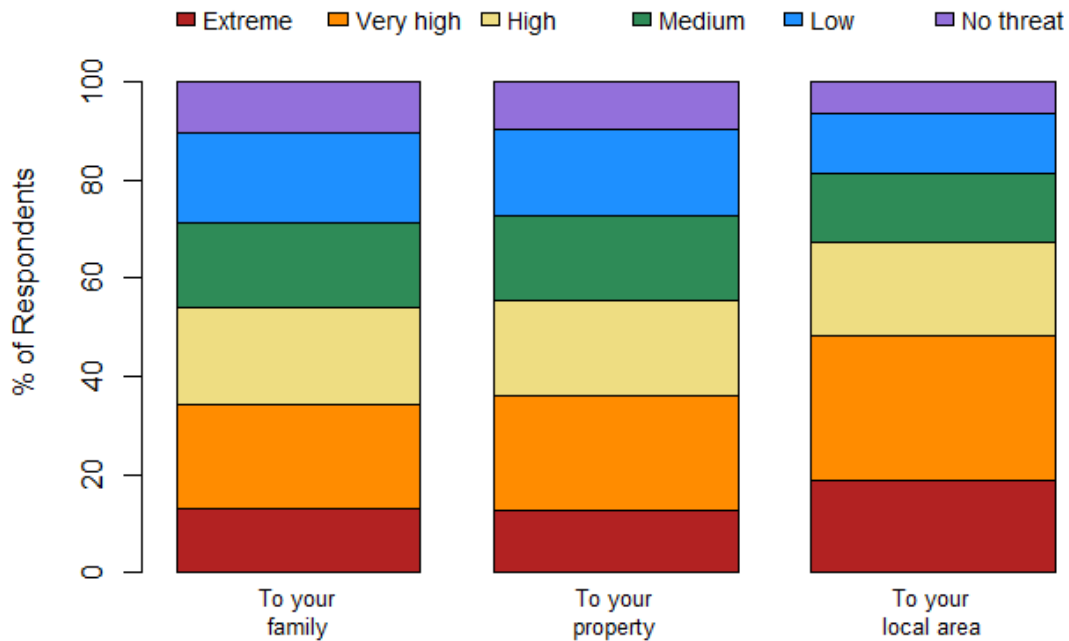


Figure 28 Perceived threat of bush fire to their family, property and local area at various levels in the days immediately before the fire posed the greatest threat (Q45).

## Warnings prior to the fire (Q. 46)

Respondents were asked to think back to the days immediately BEFORE the fire and try to recall what fire danger weather predictions or warnings did they recall about the NEXT day. A total of 487 respondents ticked at least one of the provided warnings or weather descriptions. The most common response to this was "Hot weather/high winds" (372, 76%), followed by "Total Fire Ban" (309, 63%); "Fire Danger Warnings" (267, 55%); and "Other fires in the area" (224, 46%) (Figure 29). Just less than 100 respondents recalled "State of Emergency" (99, 20%) and 66 (14%) respondents said they recalled "None".

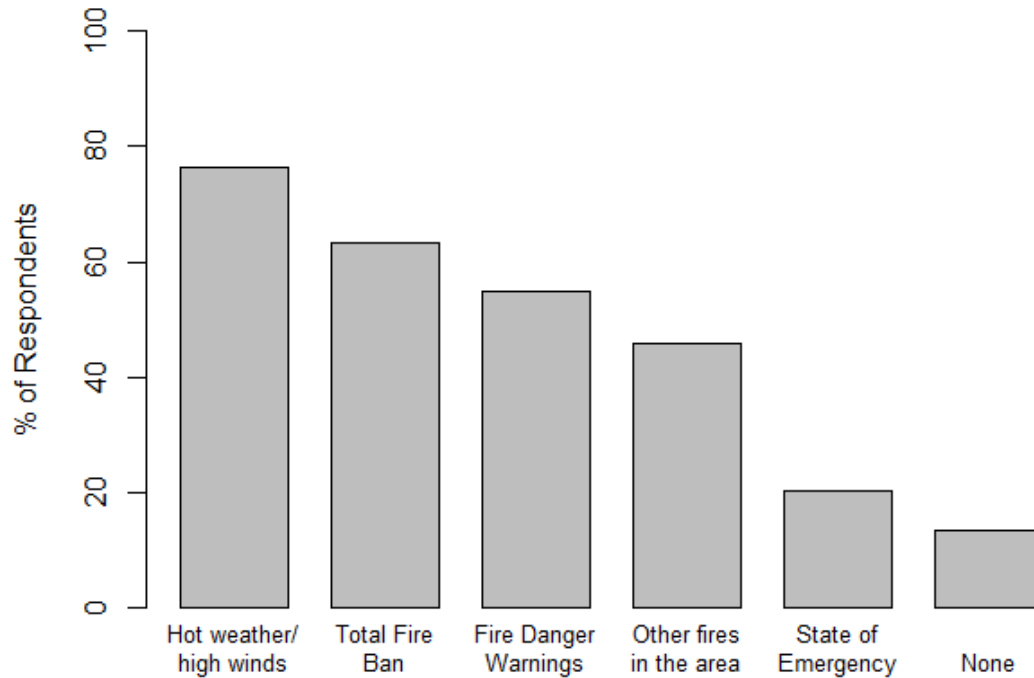


Figure 29 Fire danger weather predictions or warnings do you recall about the worst fire day (Q46).

## Preparations (Q. 47)

A total of 477 respondents ticked at least one of the options provided when asked what preparations did the make for a possible bush fire in the days immediately before the fire. The most common response was “Looked on the NSW RFS website” (328, 69%) (Table 10). This suggests that there is a strong recognition in the community about the value of this site as a source of information. However, it should be noted that as the advertising for the survey was through the NSW RFS website and official social media there may be some bias in these results.

There are a group of four responses that have similar response numbers between 220 and 260: “Collected valuables to take to safety if I had to leave” (254, 53%); “Checked Facebook or Twitter” (239, 50%); “Watched TV for fire information” (232, 49%); and “Listened to radio for information” (220, 46%). Some preparation that had low numbers are a result of them being applicable to only a portion of the respondent population, e.g. “Made special arrangements for elderly / frail / unwell household members” (39, 8%); “Made special arrangements for children” (70, 15%); and “Turned on sprinklers + generator” (62, 13%). Very few people “Call(ed) emergency authorities (fire/police) for advice” (9, 2%).

Table 10 Preparations immediately prior to the worst fire day

Preparation	No. Respondents	% of Respondents
Looked on the NSW RFS website	328	69%
Collected valuables to take to safety if I had to leave	254	53%
Checked Facebook or Twitter	239	50%
Watched TV for fire information	232	49%
Listened to radio for information	220	46%
Telephoned friends/neighbours/family	170	36%
Looked on a website other than NSW RFS	164	34%
Organised protective clothing	158	33%
Stayed home because of the fire threat	146	31%
Arranged for safety of pets/livestock	141	30%
Stayed home from work	121	25%
Blocked gutters and filled with water	95	20%
Did nothing specifically because of the fire	92	19%
Arranged to be elsewhere on the day of high fire risk	77	16%
Emailed friends/neighbours/family	73	15%
Made special arrangements for children	70	15%
Turned on sprinklers + generator	62	13%
Made special arrangements for elderly / frail / unwell household members	39	8%
Call emergency authorities (fire/police) for advice	9	2%

## FIRE AREA

A total of 429 respondents provided an answer when asked to select from a list of 2013 fire names which was the one that affected their area. The largest number of respondents were affected by the “Links View Fire, Springwood” (195, 45%) (Figure 30). The next largest group were those affected by the “Hall Road Fire, Wingecarribee” (115, 27%). The remaining fire events all had lower representation by the respondents (<10% each): “State Mine Fire, Lithgow” (38, 9%); “Mt York Rd Fire, Mt Victoria” (37, 9%); “Hank Street Fire, Port Stephens” (21, 5%); “Rutleys Road Fire, Wyong” (13, 3%); and “Browns Road, Salt Ash” (10, 2%).

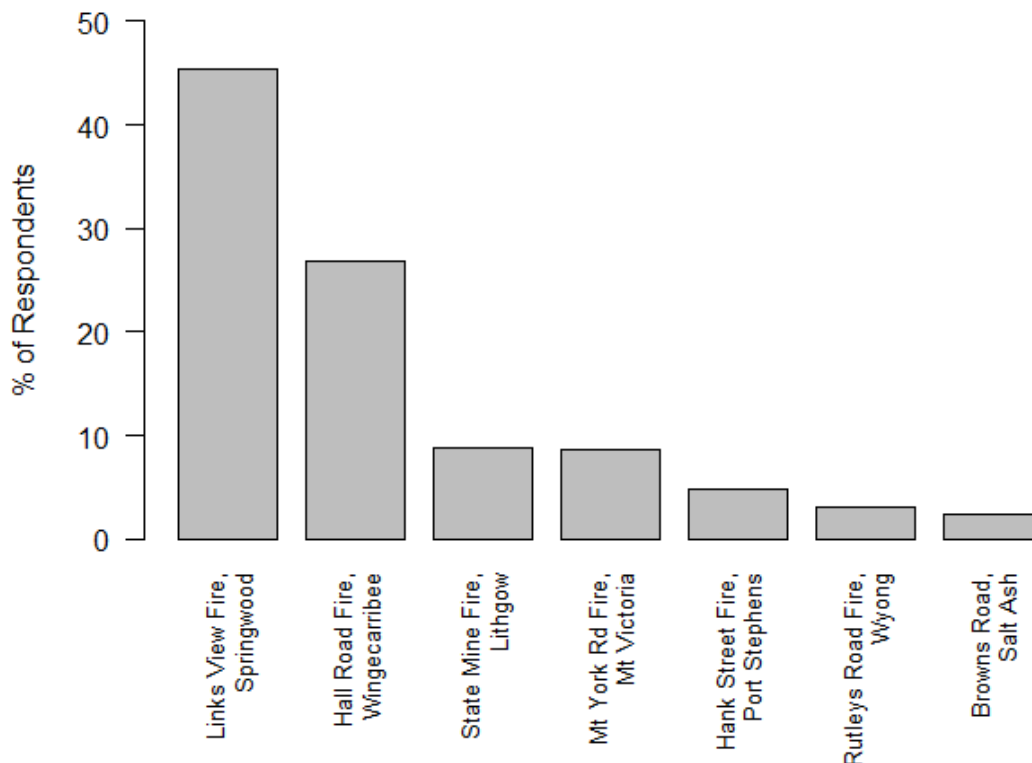


Figure 30 Number of respondents who were affected by the various 2013 fires (Q48).

There was a large group of respondents who chose to enter detail in the free-text “Other” option (73). These responses are listed in Appendix C. A number of these were respondents who were affected by more than one of the listed fires as this question did not allow multi-ticks (“Also Hank Street Fire”, “Also state mine fire can’t check both boxes”, “Also, Springwood as kids go to school at Winmalee”, “We were in the middle, between the Lithgow, Springwood and Mt Vic fires”). Another frequently represented group were RFS members whose property wasn’t affected but they were involved in one or more of the listed fire events (“none but I was involved in the Hall Road fire as a rfs member”, “I attended fires at Springwood and Mt Victoria”). Some also mentioned the other Springwood fire (Hawkesbury Rd) that occurred a couple of weeks before the October 2013 Links View Fire (“Fire in hawesbury [SIC] heights a few weeks prior to the linksvie fire”, “Hawkesbury Road Fire Winmalee 3 weeks before Links View Fire”, “And the Hawkesbury Road fire”). Others were those who did not know the name of the fire that affected them (“Fire which started at balmoral and went to yanderra unsure of name?”, “Wollondilly Shire... Yanderra”).

## Fire nearby (Q. 49)

A total of 336 respondents provided an answer when asked how close the fire got to their property. The majority of respondents said that it “Burnt nearby” (250, 74%) (Figure 31). The remaining descriptive categories in decreasing respondent numbers were: “Burnt within the grounds but not to the house” (39, 12%); “Stopped at the boundary” (24, 7%); “Damaged or destroyed the house” (13, 4%); and “Reached the house” (10, 3%). There was a very high number of free-text “Other” responses (164). These are all listed in Appendix C.

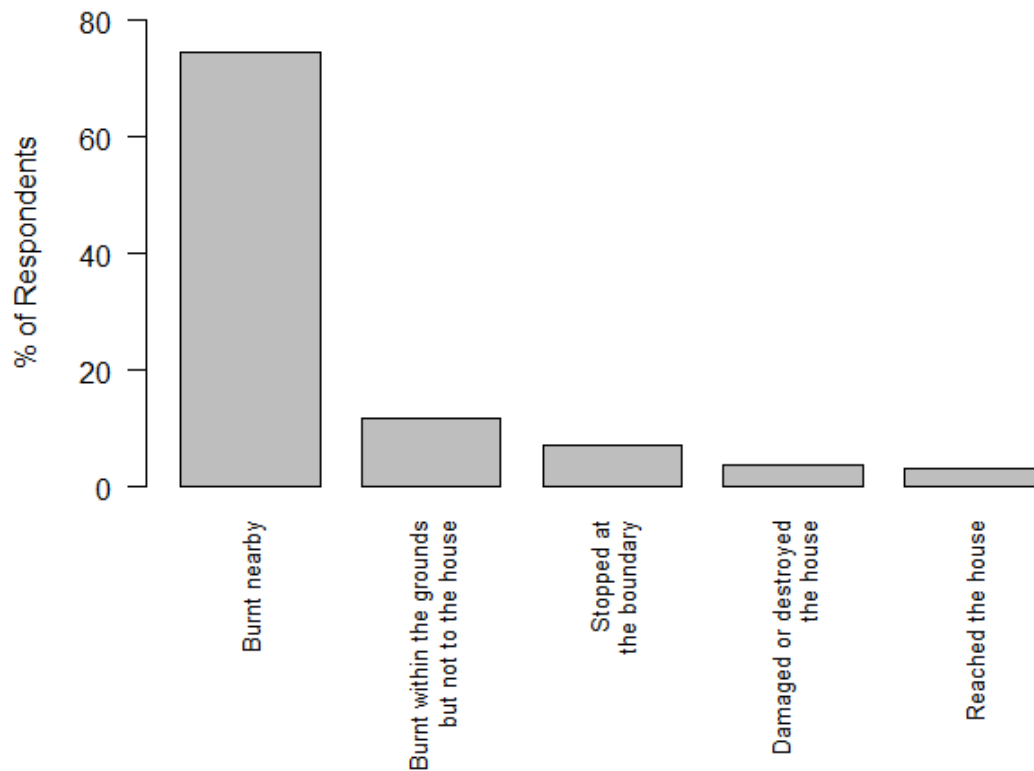


Figure 31 Response numbers to survey question: “How close did the fire get to your property?” (Q49)



Respondents were then asked to approximate the distance to the fire in metres. Answers ranged from 0 through to 300000 (300km), with a median of 1000 (1km), which was also the most common response (34); followed by 500m (30); and 2000m (25) (Figure 32). This 13 responses that recorded 0m corresponds to the 13 "Damaged or destroyed the house" responses from the previous question.

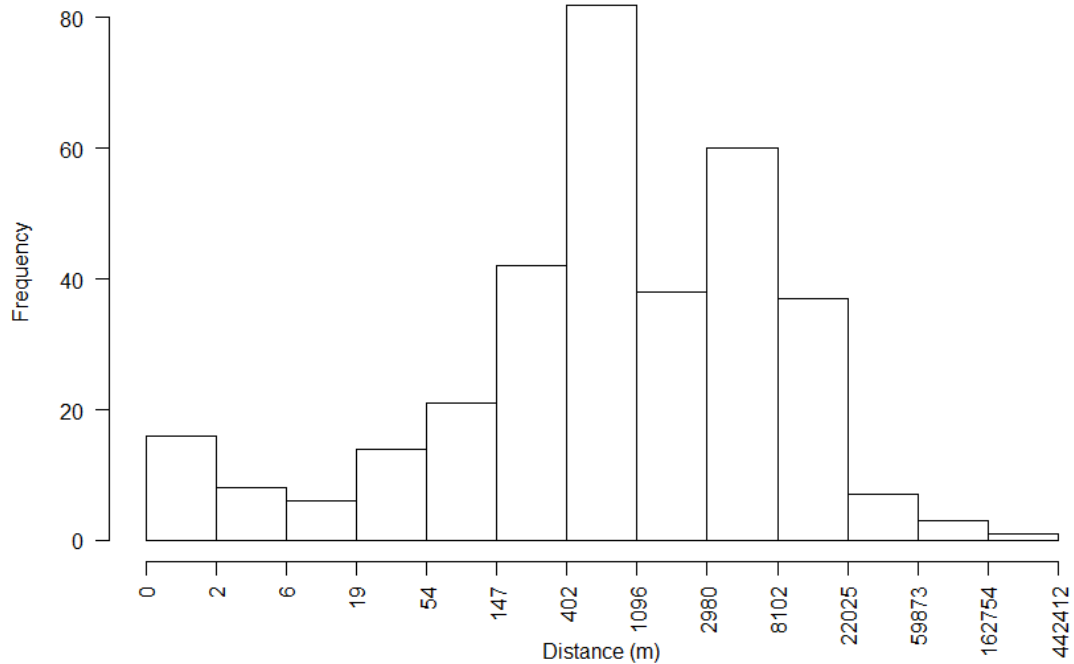


Figure 32 Frequency of responses to survey question asking respondents to approximate to distance to the fire in metres (Q50).

## ON THE DAY OF THE FIRE

### Safety concerns (Q. 51)

A total of 473 respondents provided an indication of the level of their concern for their house, self and family, respectively, when they first found out about the fires. As a group there appears to be greater concern about the risk to houses, with higher numbers of respondents indicating they were “Very concerned” (227, 48%) or “Moderately concerned” (117, 25%) about their house than for themselves (Figure 33). These values are significantly higher than the general evaluation of fire, or the values provided for the day before the fire.

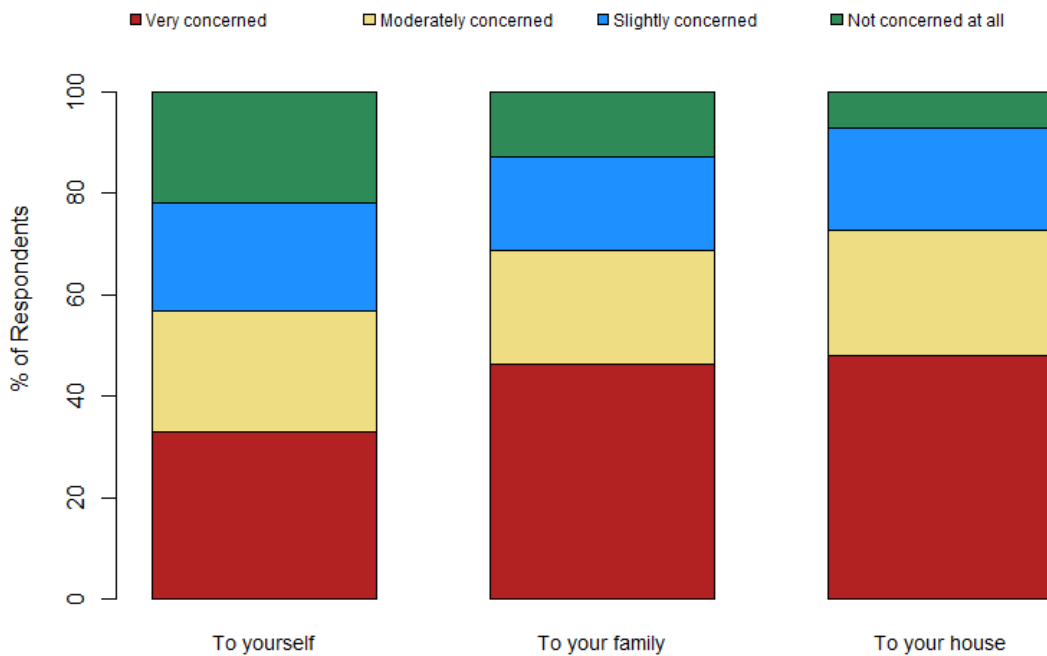


Figure 33 Level of concern when they found out a fire was in their area (Q51).

### Concerns for the fire (Q. 52)

A total of 459 respondents ticked at least one of the provided descriptions when asked what their main concerns for the fire were. The highest number of respondents indicated it was “Protecting self / family” (397, 86%) (Figure 34). This was followed by “Loss of property or home” (304, 66%), “Protecting pets” (268, 58%), “Knew road would be cut off” (195, 42%), and “Knew road would be blocked by traffic” (170, 37%). There is then a jump down to a group of concerns predominantly related to the care of others: “Had children in their care” (94, 20%); “Had children at a place potentially threatened by fire” (82, 18%); and “Asthmatic in household” (62, 14%); plus “Did not have home prepared” (68, 15%). The final group of concerns that had low respondent numbers were related to care situations specific to smaller numbers of respondents: “Loss of stock” (21, 5%); “Had to care for frail/elderly in our home” (18, 4%); “Children at home alone” (16, 3%); “Had to care for frail/elderly in their home” (14, 3%); “Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home” (11, 2%). There were 68 responses in the free-text “Other” option. These are detailed in Appendix C and reveal a number of other concerns including:

- concern around attending fires in RFS capacity (*"Arranging work schedule so I could be available for the RFS", "being away from Family because I was first response to fight fire", "had to leave my kids at home to go and help fight the Hall Rd S44 fire"*);
- assisting / caring for others not mentioned (*"Concern for neighbours", "ASSIST OTHER LANDHOLDERS", "Care for disabled young man in his own home", "Helping neighbours who didn't have a car."*);
- concern for family working at fires in RFS capacity (*"safety of my son who is a member of RFS", "Wife on the fire truck", "welfare of fellow fire fighters out fighting the fire"*).

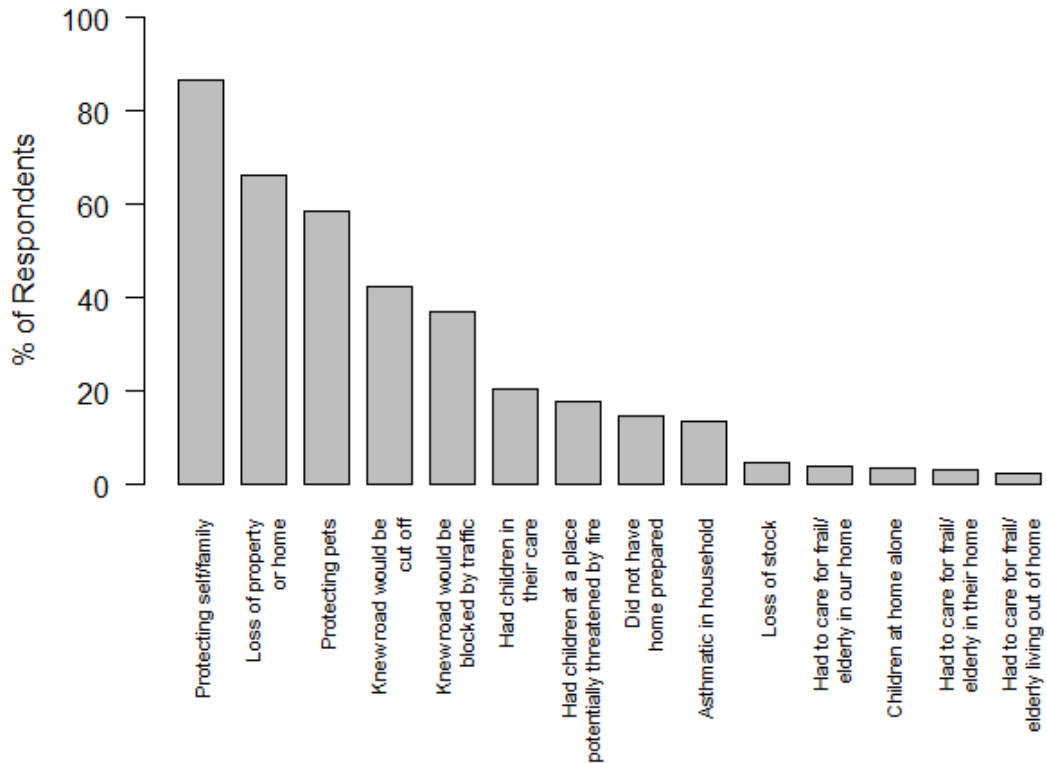


Figure 34 Major concerns for the fire in their area (Q52).

### Time to threat (Q. 53)

A total of 422 respondents answered the question which asked how long after they first learnt about the fire did it threaten their home or area close to their home. The highest number of respondents indicated that it was “More than 24 hours” (130, 31%) (Figure 35). These results reflect the fact that many of these fires burnt for multiple days with the threats to property occurring up to a week after the ignition.

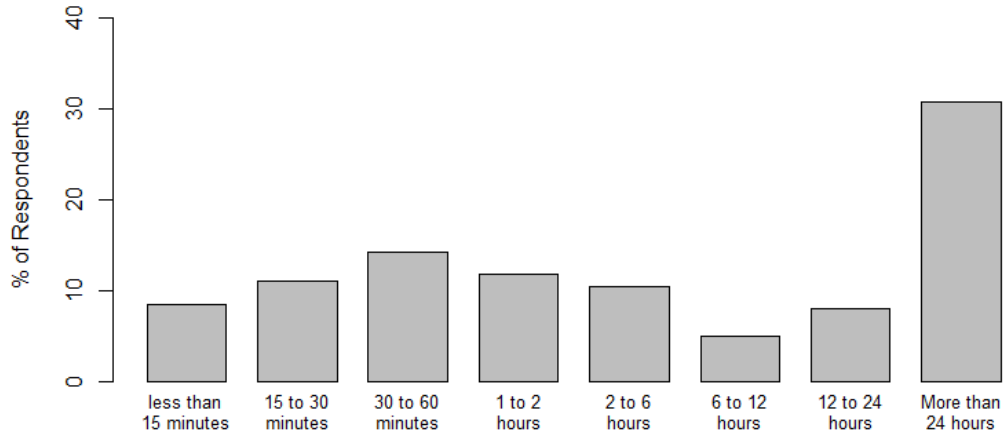


Figure 35 Responses to survey question asking how long after first learning about the fire did it threaten their home or area close to their home (Q53).

### Hearing about the fire (Q. 54)

A total of 457 respondents answered the question which asked them how they first found out about the fire. The highest number of respondents said they “Saw smoke” (209, 46%) (Figure 36). The next most common responses were: “Contact from friends / neighbours / family” (157, 34%); “Official warning via email, SMS or home phone” (137, 30%); “Smelt smoke” (120, 26%); and “RFS Fires Near Me app” (116, 25%).

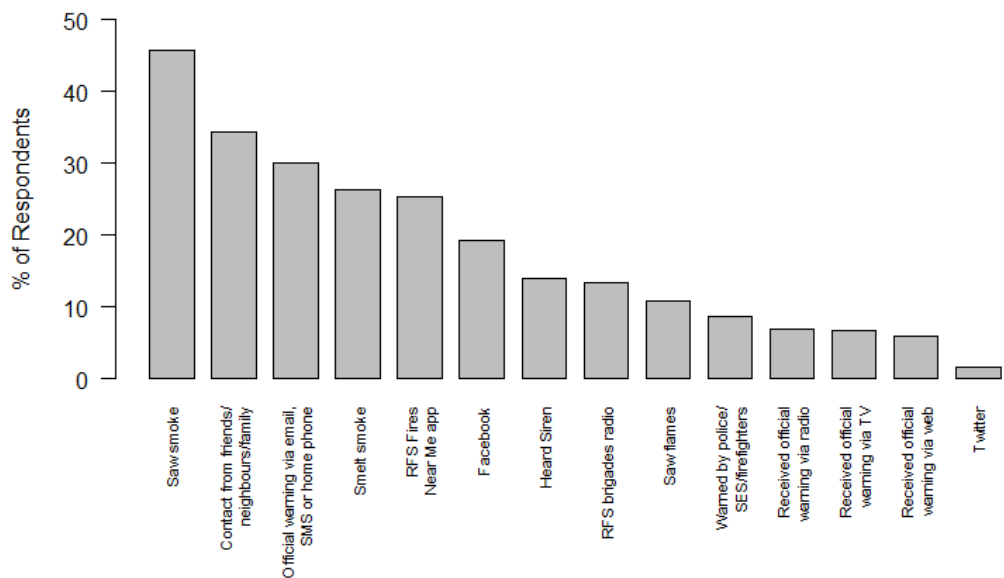


Figure 36 How respondents first found out about the fire (Q54).

### Location at the time of the fire (Q. 55, 56, 57)

Of the 454 respondents who answered the question “Were you at home at the time?” (that they first found out about the fire), less than half said they were (194, 43%). Of those that said they weren’t at home (260, 57%) at the time the majority said that they did try to get home (174, 66%) (Table 11). Without information about the specific threat to their property or the local area, it is difficult to determine the suitability of this decision. However, at the superficial level this highlights a potential issue where residents are placing themselves in unnecessary danger by returning home into the danger area.

Table 11 Responses to survey questions about whether they were home at the time of the fire or whether they tried to get home (Q55 & 56).

Were you at home at the time?		Did you try to get home?	
Yes	194 43%	Yes	174 66%
No	260 57%	No	89 34%

Those respondents that did attempt to get home were then asked how long it took. These ranged from 2 minutes to 720 minutes (12 hours), with a median of 45 minutes. The most commonly entered time was 20 minutes (16, 9%), with the next most commonly entered times sitting either side of this: 30 minute (13, 7%) and 10 minutes (11, 6%). Other individual peaks were seen at 45 minutes (10, 6%), 90 minute (12, 7%) and 120 minutes (9, 5%) (Figure 37). Twenty percent of respondents (34) indicated that they were unable to get home.

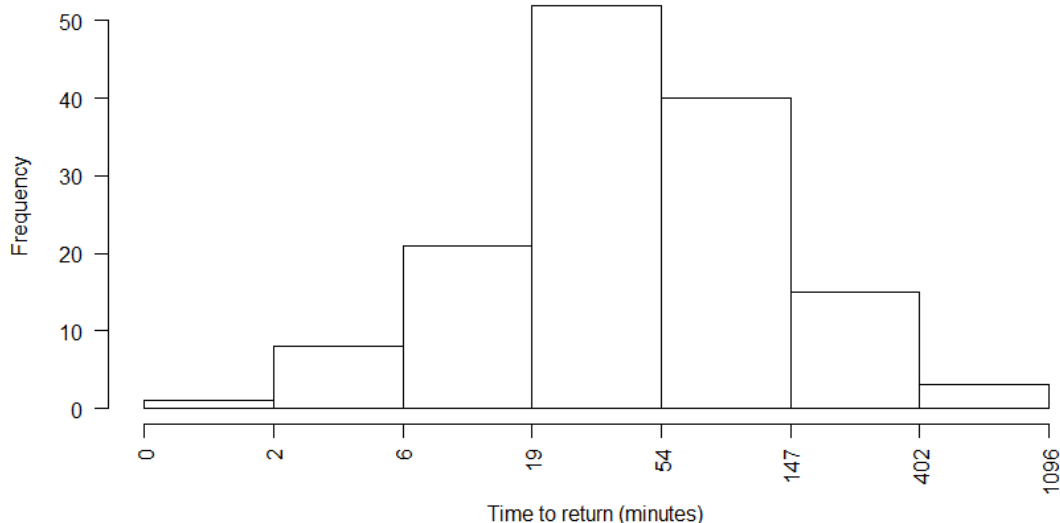


Figure 37 Length of time (Minutes) it took respondents to get to their home after they found out about the fire (Q57).

### People at the property (Q. 58 & 59)

A total of 437 respondents provided an answer to the question about the number and ages of people at the property on the day of the fire. The number at any one property ranged from 1 through to 16, with a median of 2. The majority (63%) of all people at home were Adults (19-65 years). Of the 339 respondents who indicated someone was home, 87% had at least one Adult (19-65 years) at the property on the day. Adults over 65 years represented 12% of all the people at home, and 20% of all respondent homes had at

least one person over 65. School aged children and teenagers (6-18 years) represented 15% of all people at home on the day of the fire and just over 10% were children under 6.

When asked about people that would likely require extra assistance in the event of a bush fire, 67 respondents reported having at least one person at home on the day of the fire that were either: "Incapacitated, i.e. injured or unwell"; "Disabled"; "Frail"; or "Elderly". The total number of people in all of these groups at any one property ranged from 1 to 8, with a median of 1.

## Response to the fire (Q. 60)

A total of 384 respondents provided an answer when asked what they did once they had found out about the fire. The two responses chosen by the highest number of respondents both relate to “wait and see”: 22% said they decided they would “Wait for advice from emergency services”; closely followed by those who decided they would “Wait and see how bad it is then decide” (20%) (Figure 38). The next three most commonly chosen actions all related to the different configurations:

- “Some household members leave early, others stay and defend the house/property” (55, 14%);
- “Whole household leaves early” (47, 12%); and
- “All household members stay and some or all to defend the house/property” (43, 11%).

The actions relating to what to do about children who were not at home at the time had low, but similar, response numbers:

- “Collect children from school/day care and go elsewhere” (27, 7%); and
- “Collect children from school/day care and return home” (24, 6%).

Only a small number of respondents decided they would “Stay away” (17, 4%), with an even smaller group indicating they had “No concrete plan of what to do” (12, 3%). A large number of respondents (107) entered further information in the free-text “Other” option. These are listed in Appendix C, and reveal a number of common responses:

- those that couldn’t get home (*“Couldn’t get home. Children couldn’t get out of the house. Phones kept cutting out.”; “No choice had to stay away only one road in.”*);
- those that returned home to collect valuables, children, pets or prepare to defend (*“Get home to collect the dog and open all the gates to give stock open access to dams”, “LEAVE WORK TO SAVE PHOTOS AND COMPUTERS”, “get home to defend property”, “Left work, drove straight home to get my daughter”*);
- those that fulfilled roles with RFS (*“Attended my RFS stn and started organising a crew change for that night”; “be on standby for RFS”, “got on a fire truck and went towards it”*); and
- those at school lockdowns (*“We were in lockdown at st Columbas while husband at home fighting fire”; “Was at school in a lockdown”*).

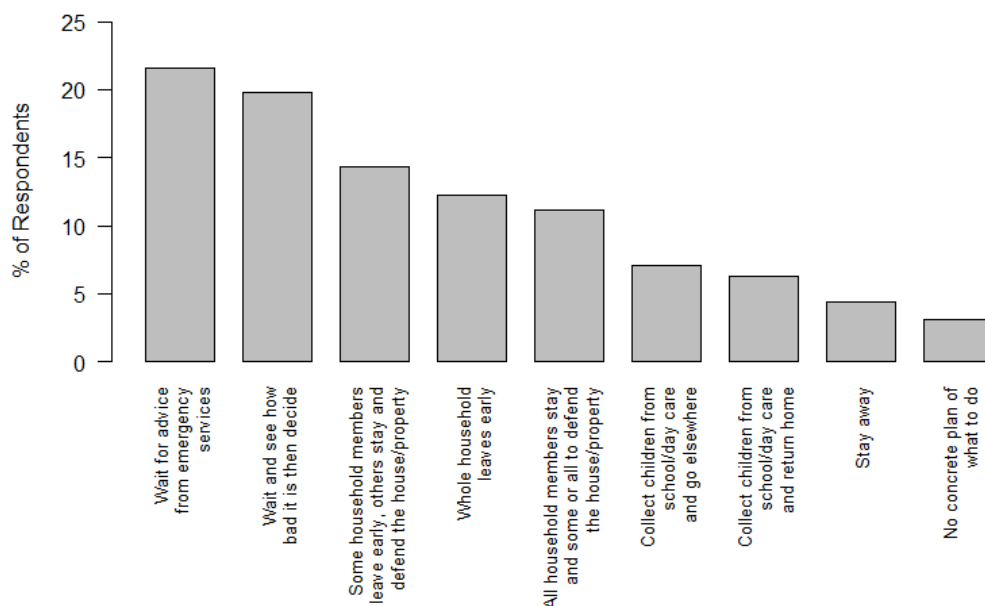


Figure 38 Response to the fire (Q 60).

## Information used in decision making (Q. 61)

A total of 409 respondents ticked at least one answer when asked to indicate what information they used to make their decision about what to do in response to the fire (previous question). The highest number of respondents said they used their "Common sense" (224, 55%) and the "RFS website" (183, 45%) (Figure 39). The next two had similar numbers: "RFS social media" (135, 33%); and "Gut instinct" (128, 31%). Very few respondents said they used information from the "Newspaper (3, 1%) or "None of the above" (16, 4%). A large number of respondents (91) entered information into the free-text "Other" option. These are listed in Appendix C and reveal a number of additional sources of information used to make decisions:

- Inside information (*"I was acting as a dep group officer so was aware of situation on the fireground and was in consistent contact with family via SMS", "I work for NPWS with access to information from fire ground"*);
- Inadequate information (*"info on web was not updated quickly enough for us to use. We needed to leave earlier than this.", "The reason I have not checked the RFS website or RFS social media was because there was no information of any value posted other than the standard see-sawing between Watch and Evacuate"*);
- Experience / awareness of fire behaviour (*"12 years rfs service", "30 yrs as a firefighter/ author / journalist", "Observation of weather and smoke"; "Origin of fire, prevailing wind and weather forecast", "Personal knowledge from 22 years RFS service"*); and
- Smoke (*"I could see the thick smoke from my office in Concord West", "seeing the severity of the smoke", "Inspection of smoke from end of my street", "Severe smoke", "Smoke was very close."*).

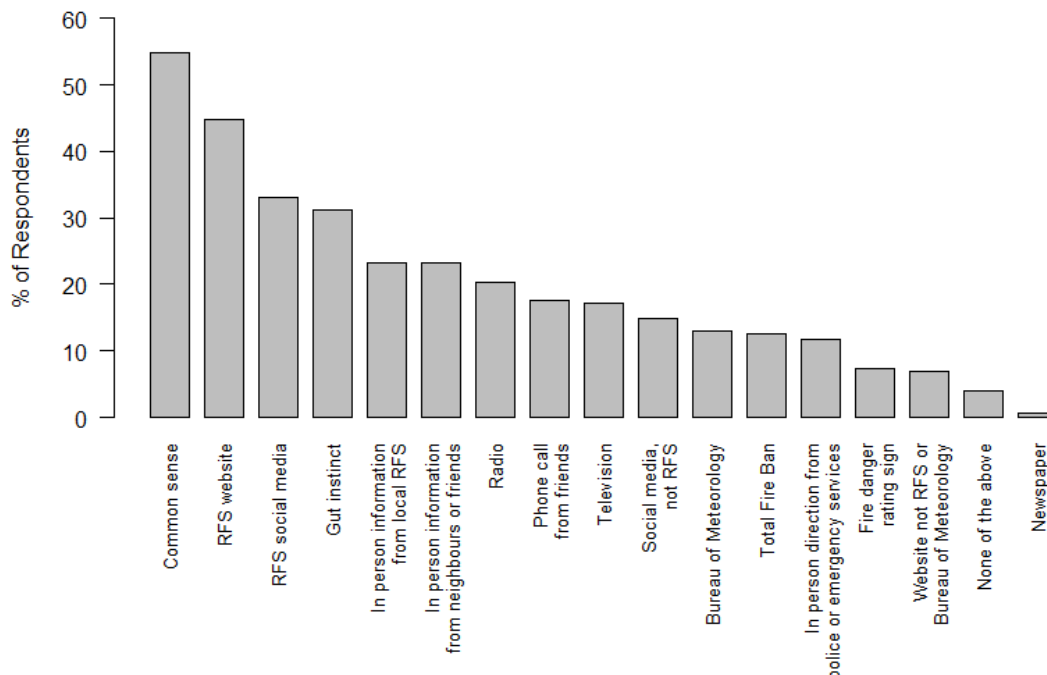


Figure 39 Responses to survey question asking respondents what information they used to make their decision (in previous question) (Q61).



## Actions on the day (Q. 62)

A total of 412 respondents ticked at least one answer when asked what they did on the day of the fire. The largest number of respondents said they were “At home and NOT impacted” (141, 34%) (Figure 40). The response chosen by the next highest number of respondents was “Not at home by chance” (113, 27%). The next group of three responses had lower but similar response numbers: “Left well before the fire arrived” (53, 13%); “Attempted to protect home/property and was successful” (46); and “Left just before the fire impacted” (43, 11%). The lowest response numbers were for those who “Waited to see what happened and had to take last-resort shelter” (17, 4%); “Not at home due to predicted fire danger rating” (16, 4%); and “Attempted to protect home/property but was unsuccessful” (6, 1%).

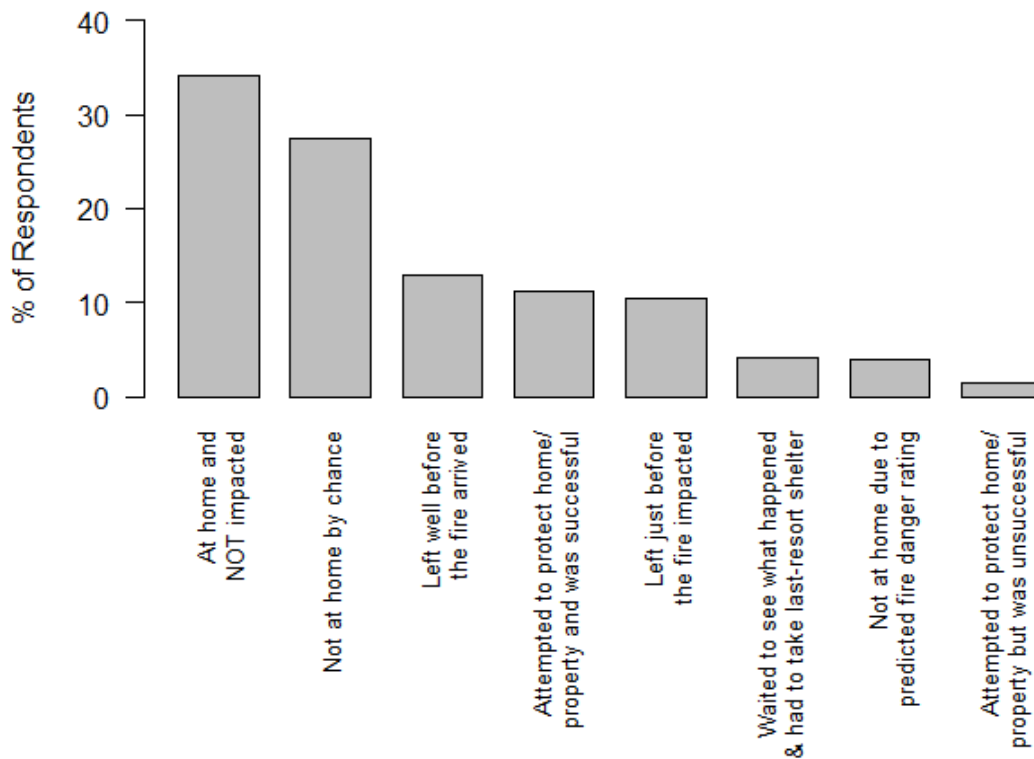


Figure 40 Actions on the day of the fire (Q62).

## Justification for the actions (Q. 63)

A total of 353 respondents ticked at least one answer when asked to indicate the main reasons for their actions on the day of the fire. The four highest responding categories, in decreasing order of respondent numbers, were: "Protecting the lives of my family" (219, 62%); "Protecting my life" (185, 52%); "Protecting pets" (173, 49%); and "Protecting home/property" (154, 44%) (Figure 41). The next highest two categories were related to transport and access: "Knew road would be cut-off" (88, 25%); and "Knew road would be blocked by traffic" (77, 22%). The group of reasons at the lowest end related to specific circumstances of a small group of respondents: "Protecting livestock" (23, 7%); "Had other people's children" (9, 3%); "Had to care for frail/elderly away from my home" (8, 2%); and "Had to care for frail/elderly in my home" (6, 2%).

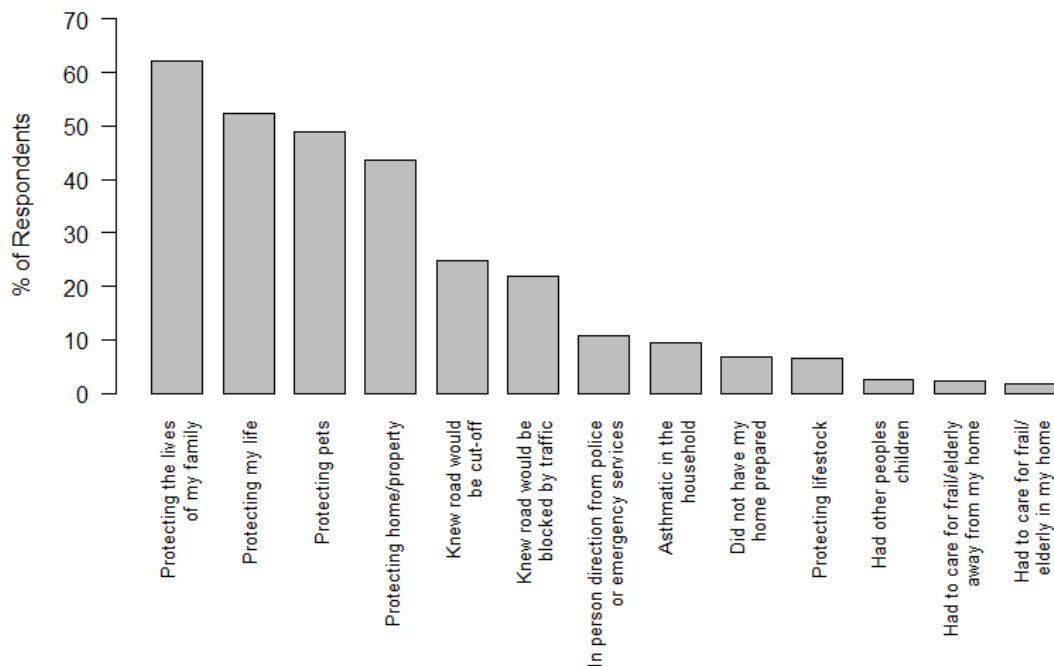


Figure 41 Main reason for their actions on the day of the fire (Q63).

Two major issues have emerged from the section relating to the actions on the day of the fire.

1. A large proportion of residents continue to adopt a "wait and see" or "wait till instructed" approach to the fire. These residents place themselves at danger by not acting in a precautionary manner. Residents who planned to leave in the event of a fire did not seem to be acting on this plan early enough. Research has demonstrated the significant risk to life when residents attempt to leave late (Haynes *et al.*, 2010; Bianchi *et al.*, 2012).
2. A large proportion of residents are relying on common sense and gut instinct to make their decisions, rather than consulting with the official sources of information.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT LEAVING

Of the 427 respondents who answered the question “Were you at any stage advised to leave your property due to the fires”, nearly 40% of respondents said they had (135, 39%), with the remainder saying they hadn’t (262, 61%). The same number of respondents (427) also answered the question “Did any of the members of the household leave due to the fires?”. Nearly half of the respondents said that some members did leave (193, 45%). A third of respondents said all left (137, 32%), and the remaining 23% (97) said no members of the household left due to the fires.

### Triggers (Q. 66)

A total of 209 respondents ticked at least one of the listed triggers to leave. The two most common triggers to leave were “Could see/smell smoke” (112, 54%); and “Received an Emergency Alert telephone warning” (109, 52%) (Figure 42). There is a substantial gap in numbers to the next two most common triggers: “Recommendation to relocate suggested by police/emergency services” (77, 37%); and “Heard/saw helicopters/aircraft” (69, 33%), which are followed by a group of four triggers with very similar numbers of respondents: “An official emergency warning about fire, other than Emergency Alert” (56, 27%); “Could see flames in the distance” (52, 25%); “Advice from friends/family members (49, 23%); and “Could see flames close by (49, 16%). A small number of respondents left because their “Home caught fire” (3, 1%). There were 44 responses in the free-text “Other” option. These are listed in Appendix C.

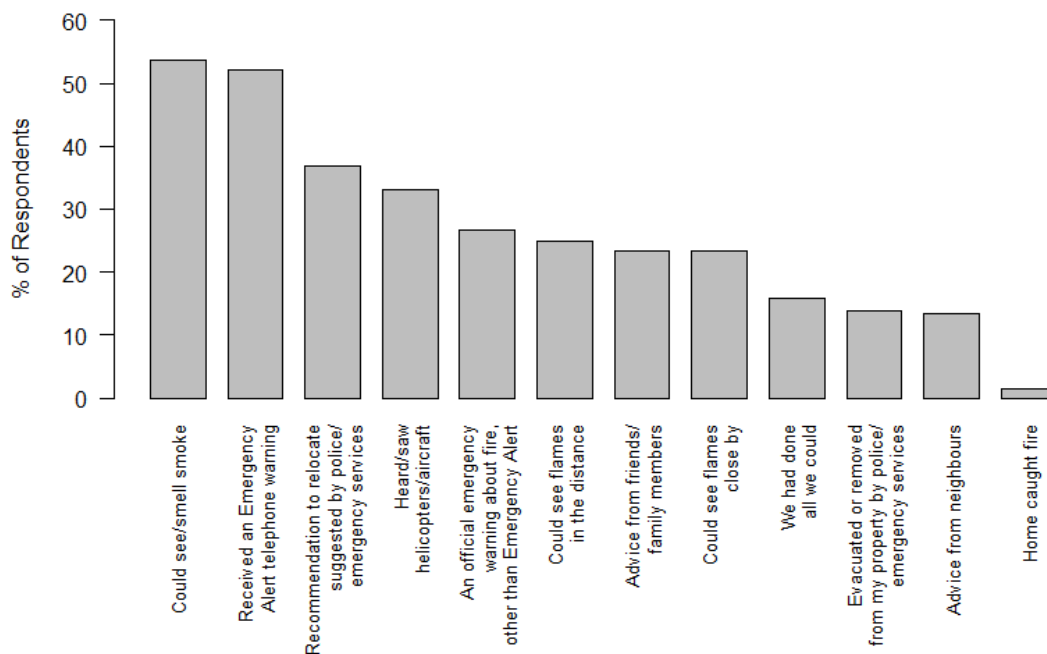


Figure 42 Triggers to leave property (Q66)

## Travel from the fire (Q. 67 & 68)

Of the 220 respondents who answered the question “How did you leave?” the vast majority said they used “Family car(s)” (206, 94%) (Figure 43). Very low numbers of respondents chose any of the other options provided: “Neighbours’ or friends’ car(s)” (7, 3%); “Walked” (4, 2%); and “Transported by emergency services” (3, 1%). No one chose the “Lift provided by strangers” option. There were 12 responses in the free-text “Other” option, most of which corresponded to the categories provided.



Figure 43 Method used for leaving property (Q67).

A total of 230 respondents ticked at least one of the provided answers to “Was travel along the route hazardous?” The majority of respondents said that travel along the route was not hazardous (163, 71%) (Figure 44). The remaining respondents said travel was hazardous along the route because of the following reasons (in decreasing order of respondent numbers): “Poor visibility due to smoke” (46, 20%); “Close to the fire” (32, 14%); “Fallen trees, branches or powerlines” (12, 5%); and “More dangerous than staying at home” (4, 2%).

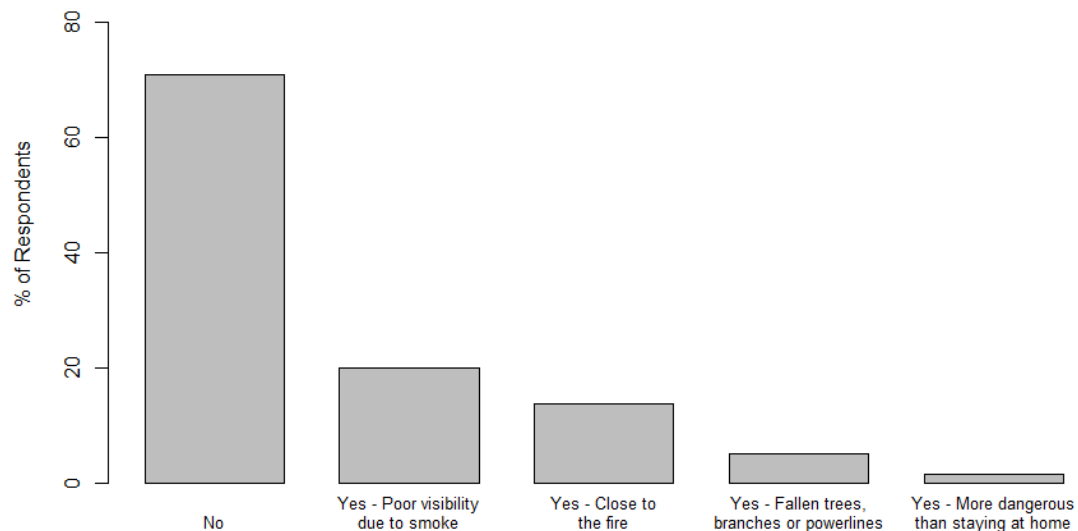


Figure 44 Survey responses to “Was travel along the route hazardous?” (Q68).

### Time away from home (Q. 69 & 70)

For the 224 respondents that answered the question “How long were you away from your home?”, the most common answer was “A few hours” (82, 37%), closely followed by “Overnight” (71, 32%) (Figure 45). Smaller groups of respondents were away from their home for “1-2 days” (25, 11%) and “For more than two days but less than a week” (35, 16%). Only 5% of respondents said that they were away for “More than a week” (11).

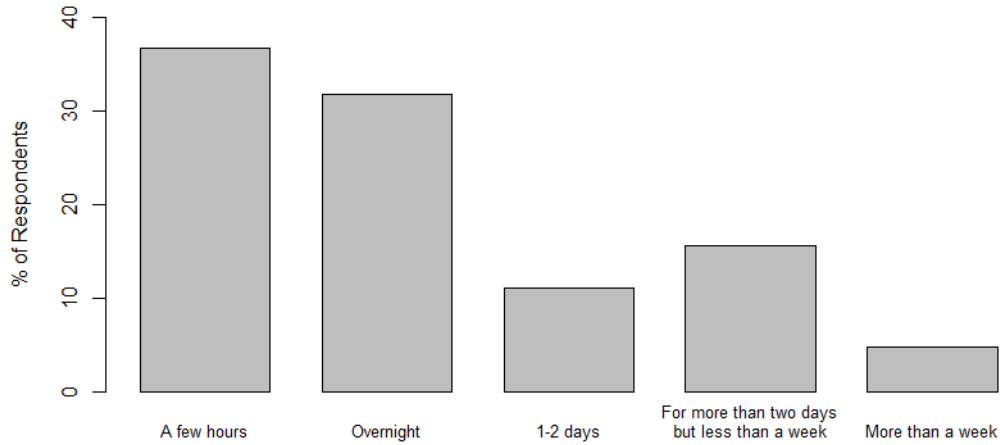


Figure 45 How long respondents were away from their homes (Q69).

Of the 200 respondents that answered the question asking them where they first went, the majority said that after they left their property they first went to “Family, friends or neighbours house” (139, 70%) (Figure 46). Nearly 20% went to a “Community place (e.g. shopping centre) well away from bushland” (38), and 10% went to an “Evacuation centre” (20). Very few respondents went to a “Neighbourhood Safer Place (RFS designated)” (3, 2%). There were 39 responses in the free-text “Other” option. These are listed in Appendix C.

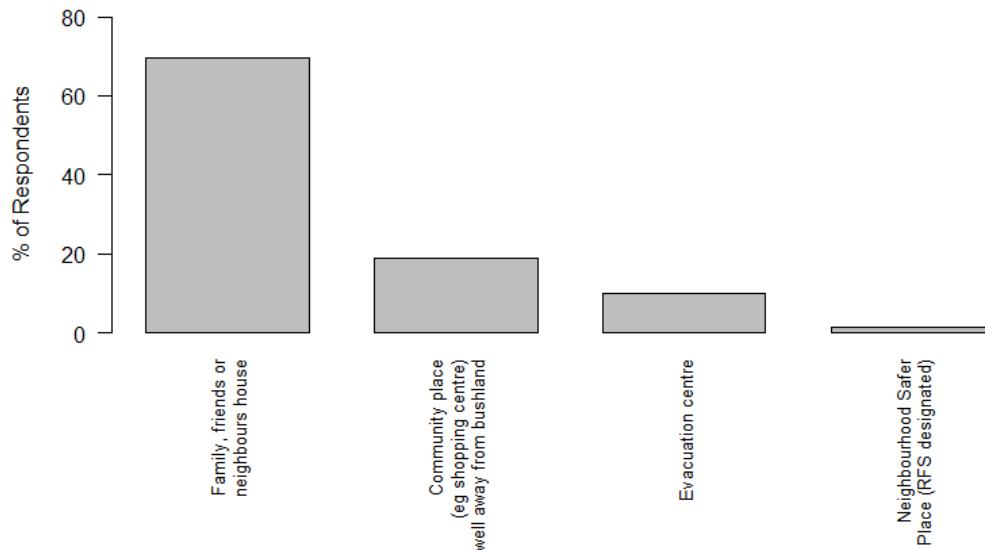


Figure 46 Where respondents first went after leaving their property (Q70).

## Feelings about leaving during bush fire (Q. 71)

A total of 225 respondents answered the question which asked how they felt about leaving during the bush fire. The most common answer was “It was the right thing to do” (82, 36%) (Figure 47). The next most common answers were: “It was unnecessary (although inconvenient) and if there’s a next time I would do it again” (53, 24%); “It was unnecessary but if there’s a next time I would do it again” (38, 17%); and “Not a problem and I’d do it again” (33, 15%). Less than 10% of respondents chose either of the options that indicated that they wouldn’t leave if there was a next time: “It was unnecessary and if there’s a next time I won’t” (17, 8%); and “It was necessary but if there’s a next time I won’t do it because it was so inconvenient” (2, 1%).

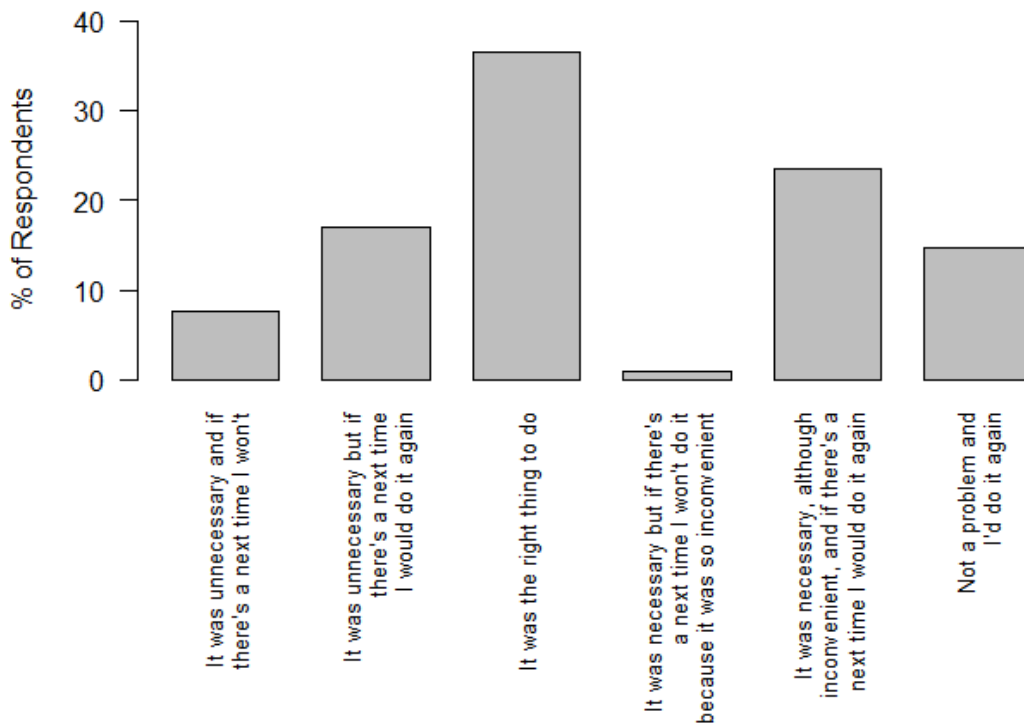


Figure 47 Feelings about leaving during the fires (Q71).

## QUESTIONS ABOUT STAYING

A total of 415 respondents answered the question which asked whether any members of their household stayed at their property during the fire. Of those that responded to this question, 40% said “No” (166), whilst those that said yes (249, 60%) were split fairly evenly between all members of household staying (127, 31%) and some members of household staying (122, 29%).

### Reasons for staying (Q. 73)

As the next question followed on from the previous one in asking “why did you stay”, there were only 190 respondents who answered. Nearly all of these respondents said it was because they “Decided it was safe” (182, 96%) (Figure 48). Respondent numbers for the two other options were very low: “Left it too late and could not leave” (6, 3%); “I had no transport to leave” (2, 1%). There were a large number (84) of responses in the free-text “Other” option. These are listed in Appendix C.

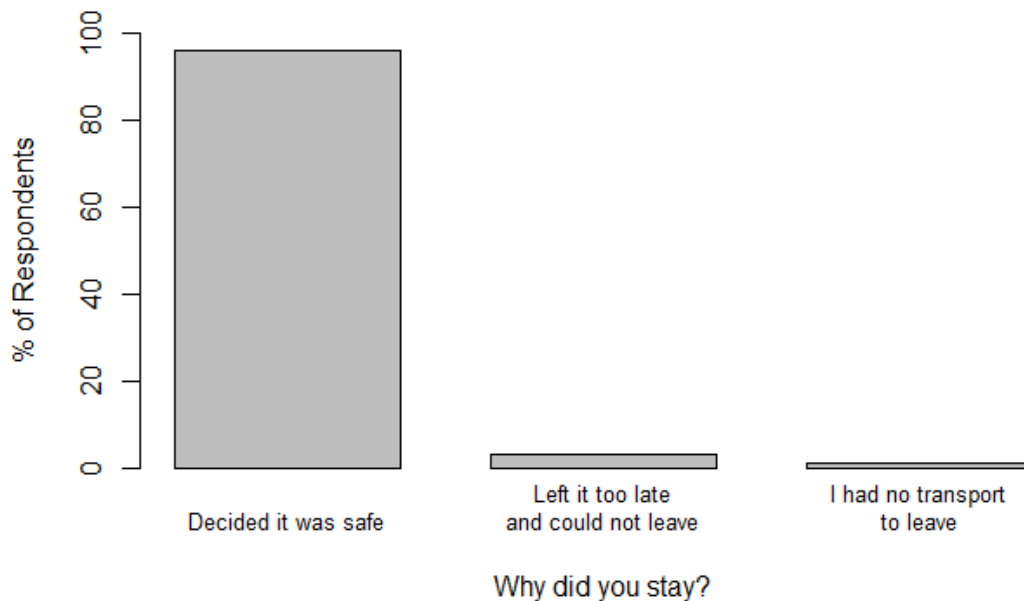


Figure 48 Reasons why respondents decided to stay at their property during the fire (Q73).

## Protecting to property from fire (Q. 74, 75 & 76)

A total of 244 respondents provided an answer when asked if some or all of those that stayed actively tried to protect the house / property. Just over half of these respondents said yes (134, 55%), with 110 (45%) saying no one tried to protect the house / property. The follow-on question, which asked how long did they actively protect their property, was answered by 137 respondents. Answers range from 0 to 289 hours with a median of 5. The most common responses were 0 hours (20), 3 hours (16), 2 hours (13), and 24 hours (13) (Figure 49). The respondents who defended their property longer than 24 hrs probably represents repeated threats to property rather than continuous defence.

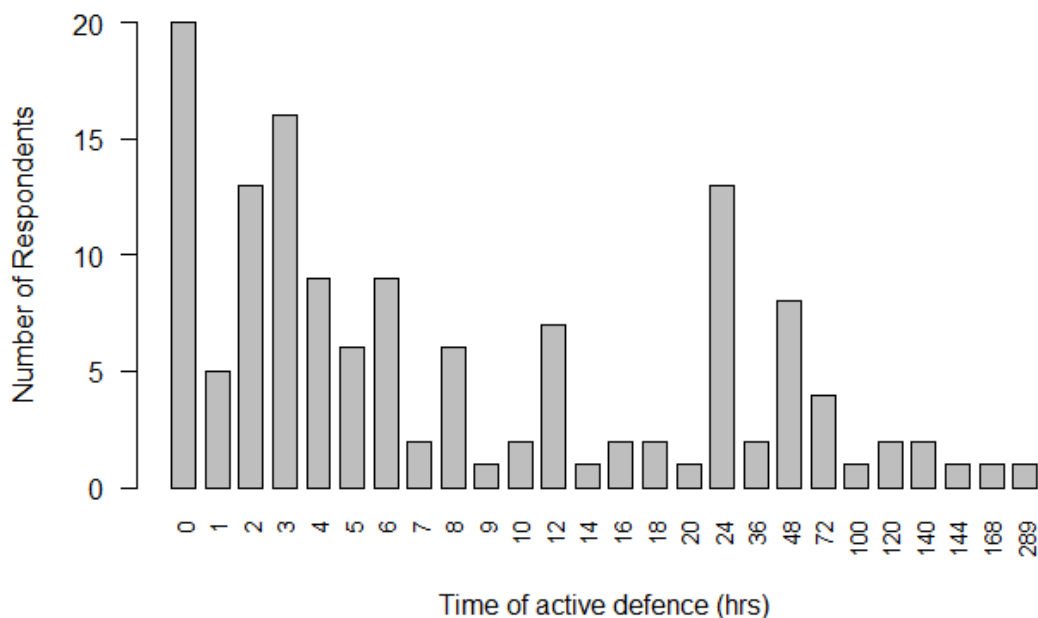


Figure 49 Length of time (in hours) that respondents actively tried to protect their property (Q75).

The question which asked what they did to protect their property from fire was answered by only 5 respondents, a couple of which chose more than one of the options:

- Preventative wetting down objects (3)
- Extinguish spot fires in vegetation around the home (2)
- Extinguish embers igniting on the house (2)
- Protecting the house from direct flame contact or radiant heat (2)
- Extinguish embers igniting on outbuildings (1)
- Putting out fire on the house arising from direct flame contact or radiant heat (1)
- None (1)

There was only 1 "Other" response: *"Our home not threatened."*



### Equipment used (Q. 77)

A total of 133 respondents ticked at least one option when asked what equipment they used in protecting their property. The most frequently ticked option was “Garden hose” (112, 84%), followed closely by “Long sleeved shirt and pants (cotton)” (101, 76%) and “Boots” (96, 72%) (Figure 50). Specialised equipment was utilised by a relatively small number of respondents: “Mobile water supply (e.g. tank trailer or tank on a ute)” (22, 17%); “Bushfire sprinkler system” (18, 14%); “Tractor (slashing or ploughing to clear ground)” (8, 6%).

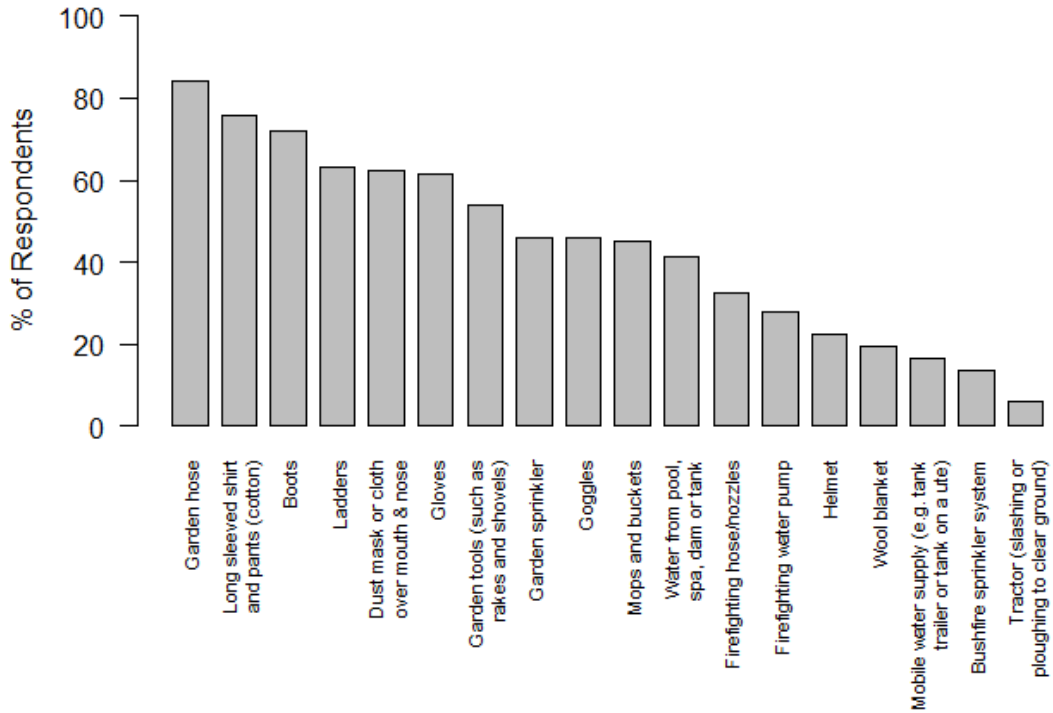


Figure 50 Equipment used by respondents (Q77).

## QUESTIONS ABOUT SHELTERING

Of the 405 respondents that answered the question “Did any members of the household seek shelter in the house or other place on the property?”, only a small number answered “Yes” (38, 9%).

### Place of shelter (Q. 79)

A total of 23 respondents ticked at least one of “Place of shelter” options provided. The most common place that respondents sheltered was the “Living room” (14, 61%), Followed by “A bathroom” (5, 22%) (Table 12). Bedrooms, Kitchens, Laundry and Garages were only used as place of shelter by a few respondents. One respondent said they sheltered in a “bushfire bunker”. No respondents chose “Basement”, “Open area”, “Pool”, “Study”, “Vehicle”, or “Water tank” as the place that they sheltered.

Table 12 Place in which survey respondents sheltered during the fire (Q79).

Where did you / they shelter?	No. respondents	% of respondents
Living room	14	61%
A bathroom	5	22%
A bedroom	3	13%
Kitchen	2	9%
Laundry	2	9%
Garage	1	4%
A bushfire bunker	1	4%

There were nine responses in the free-text “Other” option which included in the house, hallway then pool area, subfloor area and under a sandstone terrace.

## ASSISTANCE IN PROTECTING PROPERTY

Of the 352 respondents who answered this question, the majority did not receive any help in protecting their property (231, 66%) (Figure 51). Fire-fighters or other emergency services assisted 65 (18%) respondents, whilst 42 (12%) said that family or friends (not from the household) deliberately came to help. A small number of respondents were helped by a "Community Fire Unit" (10, 3%) or "Strangers" (4, 1%).

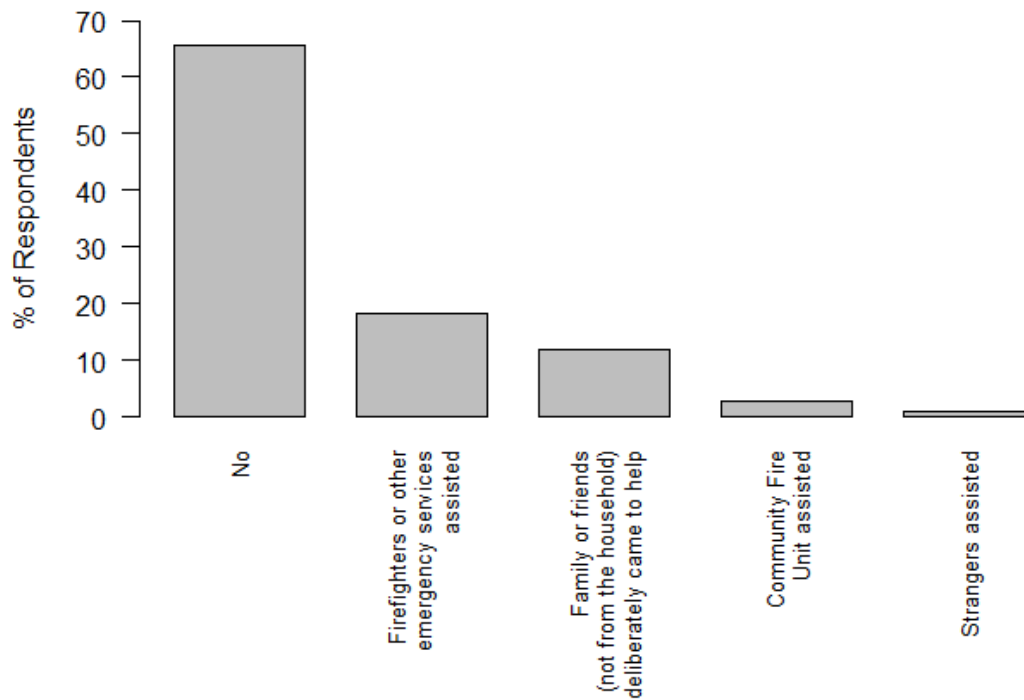


Figure 51 Help in protecting the property (Q80).

## UTILITIES

A total of 401 respondents provided at least one response when asked about whether they lost any essential services during the fire. A greater number, and proportion, of respondents reported losing Electricity (147, 37%) than any of the other utilities (Figure 52). For utilities other than Electricity the proportion of respondents who reported they didn't lose essential services was similar and consistently greater than 70%.

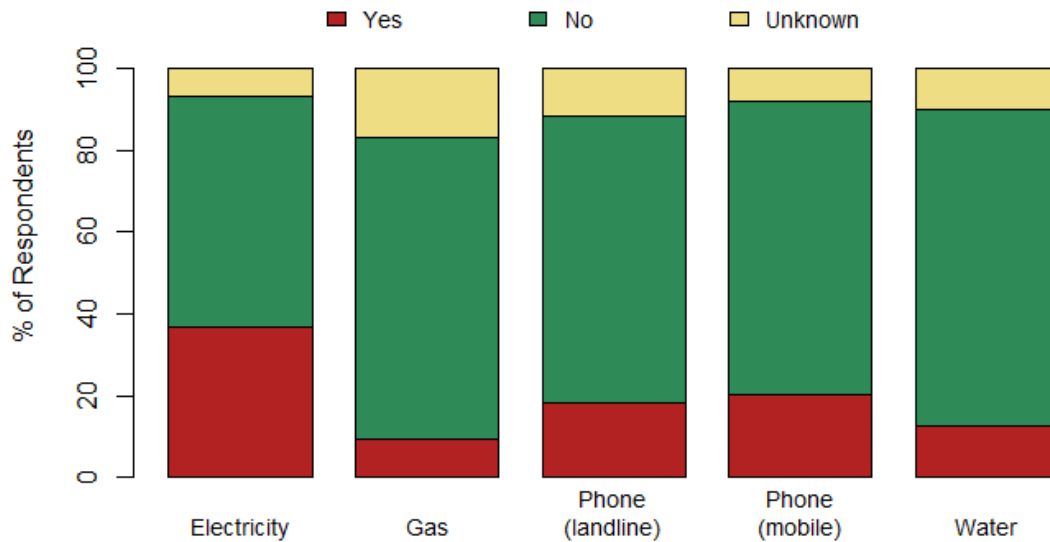


Figure 52 Proportion of respondents who lost essential services during the fire (Q81).

## QUESTIONS ABOUT DAMAGE

A total of 414 respondents answered the question which asked whether there was any damage to their house, property or pets. A small group of respondents said yes (49, 12%), with the majority saying no (365, 88%) there wasn't any damage as a result of the fire.

### Damage to home (Q. 83)

The small group of respondents who had damage to their property (49) were then asked whether their home was damaged or destroyed by fire. Half of the respondents to this question said that their "House survived, no damage" (25, 50%) (Figure 53). Over a quarter said that their "House survived, minor damage" (14, 28%). A small number of respondents said their house was destroyed (9, 18%), with only 2 respondents choosing "House survived but major damage" (4%).

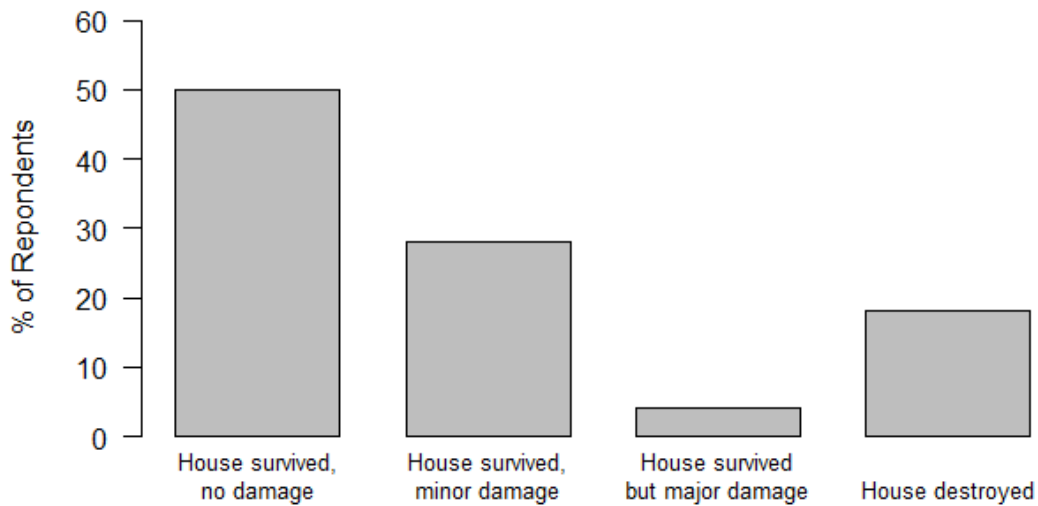


Figure 53 Damage to the house during the fire (Q83).

### Damage to other property (Q. 84)

The small group of respondents who had reported damage to their property (49) were then asked about a number of property items (other than house / home) and if they were damaged or destroyed. The item that was reported by the largest proportion of respondents as being damaged or destroyed was Sheds (17 destroyed (35%), 5 damaged (13%)) (Figure 54). The property items with the next highest proportions of respondents reporting damage or destroyed were “Other buildings”, “Pipes or hoses for fire fighting”, “Water tanks”. Vehicles had the highest proportion of respondents reporting “No damage” (34, 69%) and only 1 caravan/motorhome was reported as being destroyed.

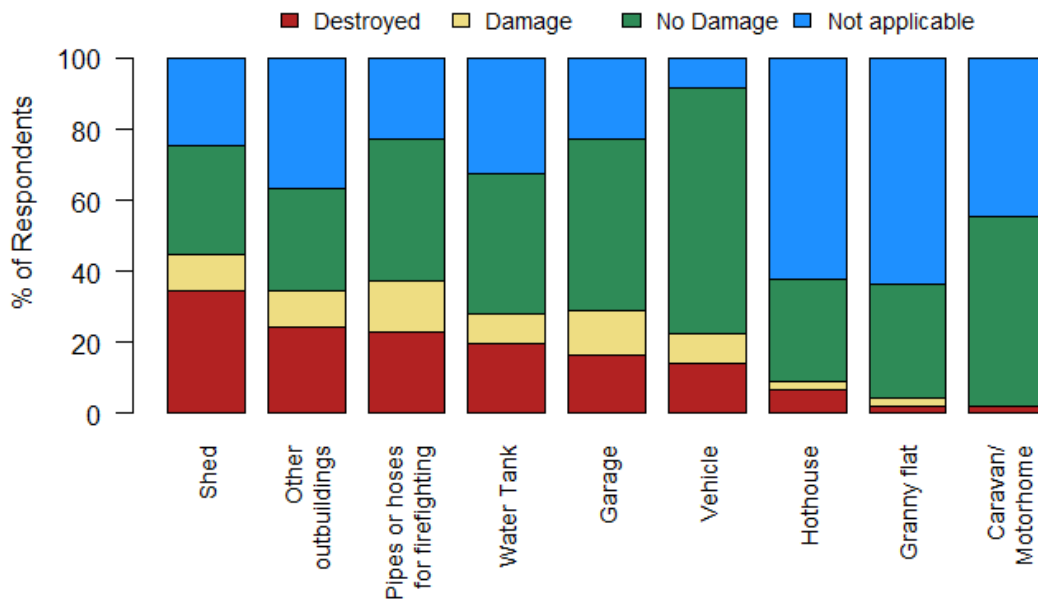


Figure 54 Damage to property other than their house, based on 49 respondents who suffered some damage (Q84).

### Pets and Livestock (Q. 85)

Respondents were asked to provide the number/s of pets and livestock that were injured or killed. Overall, three pets were reported injured and three killed (3 respondents each reporting 1 pet injured, 1 respondent reporting 1 pet killed and 1 respondent reporting 2 pets killed). No poultry were reported being injured and two respondents each reported five poultry killed (total of ten poultry killed). No livestock were reported as injured or killed.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT MESSAGING

A total of 419 respondents answered the question about the official RFS warnings (text messages, information on web sites, radio etc.). The majority of respondents agreed that they were “Clear” (73%), “Relevant” (71%) and “Sufficient” (69%) (Figure 55). Just over half of the respondents felt they were not “Too soon” (57%) or “Alarmist” (56%). Half of the respondents agreed that they were “Sufficiently localised” (50%), but 20% disagreed with this description.

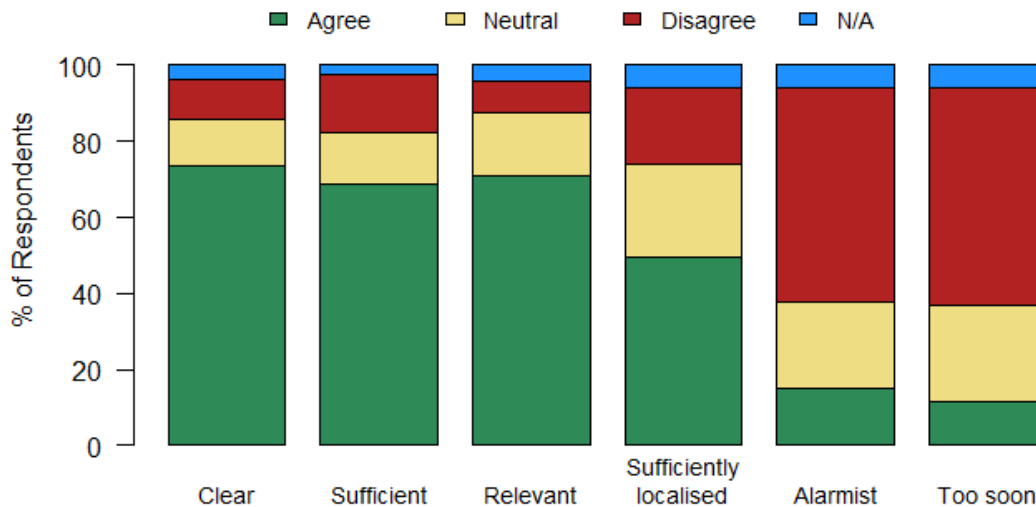


Figure 55 Opinions of official RFS warnings, e.g. text messages, information on websites or on radio (Q86).

### Telephone messaging (Q. 87 & 88)

A total of 414 respondents answered the question asking them about receiving official warnings by telephone. Just over half of the respondents said yes (222, 54%) they had received an official warning on telephone (such as recorded messages from the RFS) as to what action to take with respect to the fires in the area. The remainder didn’t receive any telephone messages (192, 46%). Of those that had received telephone messages the majority agreed that they were “Useful” (87%), “Timely” (76%), “Right Frequency” (84%) and “Sufficiently Local” (82%).

### SMS messaging (Q. 89 & 90)

Of the 412 respondents who answered the question about SMS messaging, the majority said yes (286, 69%) they had received advice via SMS (text message) as to what action to take with respect to the fires in the area. The remainder didn’t receive any SMS messages (126, 31%). Of those that received SMS messages the majority agreed that they were “Useful” (86%), “Timely” (75%), “Right Frequency” (83%) and “Sufficiently Local” (75%).

### Radio messaging (Q. 91, 92 & 93)

Of the 415 respondents who answered the question about radio messaging, just over half said yes (210, 51%) they heard advice on the radio as to what action to take with respect to the fires in the area. The remainder didn’t hear advice on the radio (205, 49%). Of those that heard fire advice on the radio, the

majority agreed that it was “Useful” (90%), “Timely” (85%), “Right Frequency” (87%) and “Sufficiently Local” (78%). A free-text box was provided for respondents to provide information on which radio stations they received information from. A large number of respondents (171) entered something in this option (full list in Appendix C). The most commonly used provider was the ABC Local station, which is unsurprising given it is the official emergency information network. However, a range of other local FM and AM stations were also reported to have provided useful information. Major FM networks were rarely identified as useful.

## Internet information (Q. 94, 95 & 96)

Of the 412 respondents who answered the question about internet information, the majority of respondents said yes (319, 77%) they accessed warnings or information with respect to the fires in their area via the internet. The remainder didn’t access fire information via the internet (93, 23%). Of those that accessed fire information via the internet, the majority agreed that it was “Useful” (94%), “Up to date” (76%) and “Sufficiently Local” (83%). A free-text box was provided for respondents to provide information on which website/s they used. A very large number of respondents (267) entered something in this option (full list in Appendix C), however the most common answer related to the official NSW RFS website.

## Social Media (Q. 97, 98, & 99)

Of the 411 respondents who answered the question about social media, the majority of respondents said yes (299, 73%) they used social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) during the fires. The remainder didn’t use social media during the fires (112, 27%). When asked whether they uploaded information or comments to social media during the fires a large number of respondents said they did to Facebook (219). A smaller number (82) said they didn’t upload any information to social media and a much smaller number of people said they had uploaded information or comments to Twitter (18). A free-text “Other” option was used only by 4 respondents:

- *"goolge[SIC] earth pics and weather"*
- *"I had no phone connection so communicated with family (I was stuck at Yellow Rock and isolated for about 8 hours). The RFS site was very slow to update so I followed local sites on FB"*
- *"update status's and photo's"*
- *"warnings were too late, alarmist, too many."*

Respondents were asked which was the most reliable source of social media. Total respondent numbers for this question were much greater for Facebook (293) than for Twitter (47) and “Other social media” (52). For Facebook, respondents found the NSW RFS (official) page the most reliable (126, 43%), closely followed by various NSW RFS (local brigade) pages (113, 39%) (Figure 56). For Twitter, the NSW RFS (official) had a much greater proportion of respondents who said it was the most reliable source of social media (34, 72%).



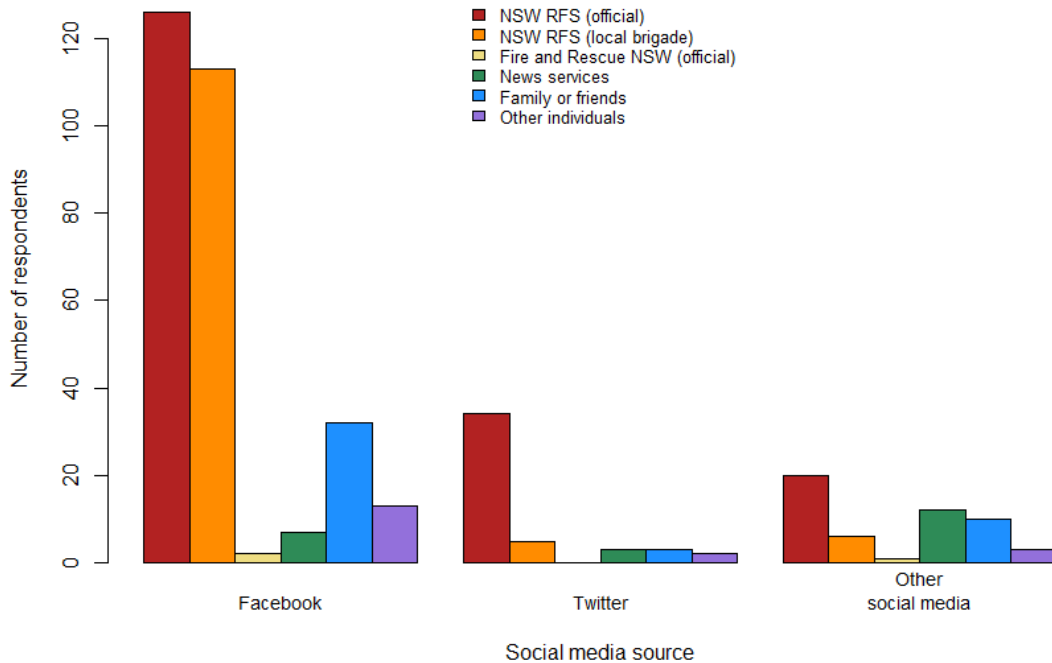


Figure 56 Most reliable source of social media (Q99).

### Most reliable source of information throughout the fires (Q. 100)

A total of 404 respondents answered the question about what was the most reliable source of information throughout the fire. The largest number of respondents said the “RFS Website” (146, 36%) (Figure 57), followed by “Facebook” (97, 24%) and “Local RFS volunteers” (79, 20%). There is then a sharp drop in number of respondents who chose the remaining categories (all less than 10%). There were a large number (42) of responses in the free-text “Other” option. As above, many of these responses were variants on the existing categories. One exception was frequent mention of the “Blue Mountains Firewatch” Facebook page.

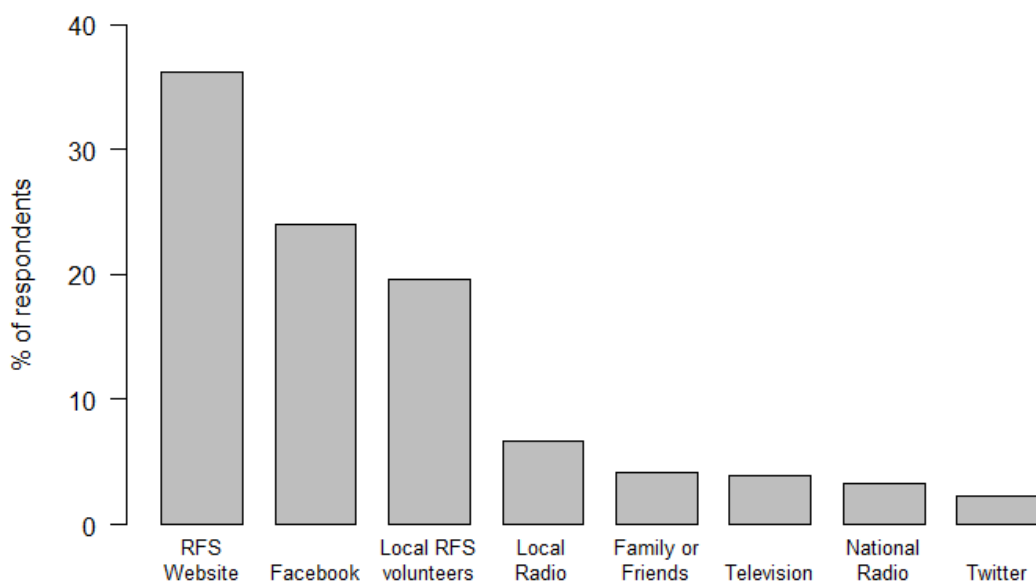


Figure 57 Most reliable source of information throughout the fires (Q100).

### Preferred methods for receiving warnings (Q. 101)

A total of 409 respondents provided at least one preference when asked what their preferred method for receiving warnings in future events would be. The majority of respondents chose "Text message" for their first preference (270, 66%) (Figure 58). The next most popular choice for first preference was "Recorded message by phone" (63, 15%). The second preferences were much more evenly spread, the equal-highest method being "Recorded message by phone" and "Facebook (both 102, 26%). These were closely followed by "Radio" (74, 19%) and "Text message" (77, 19%). There were a number (26) of responses in the free-text "Other" option. These are listed in Appendix C.

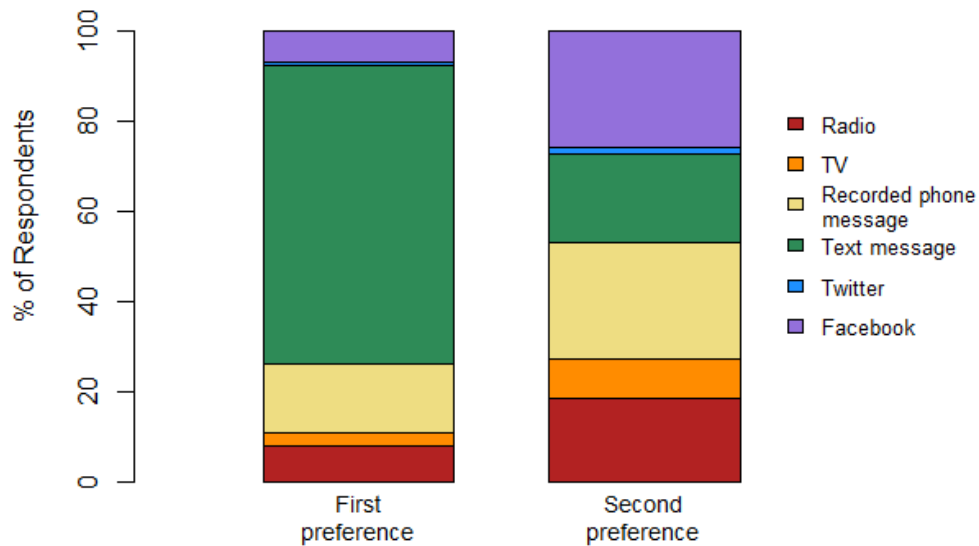


Figure 58 Preferred methods (first and second choice) for receiving warnings (Q101).

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS

A total of 412 respondents answered the question asking them if they attended a community meeting held in association with the recent fires. Nearly half of the respondents (202, 49%) said they did, whilst a third said they didn't (136, 33%) and the remainder said there were none in their area or that they found out about them too late (Table 13).

Table 13 Attendance of community meetings held in association with the fires (Q102)

Attend Community Meeting	No. respondents	% of respondents
Yes	202	49%
No	136	33%
None in my area	43	10%
Found out too late	31	8%

A total of 175 respondents ticked at least one of the listed ways in which they found out about their community meeting. The most common way in which respondents found out about the community meetings was through Facebook (97, 55%) (Figure 59). This was closely followed by "Word of mouth" (85, 49%). The RFS website was the third most common way of finding out about community meetings (62, 35%) whilst all other methods fell below 20 respondents (<10%). There were a number (40) of responses in the free-text "Other" option. These are listed in Appendix C.

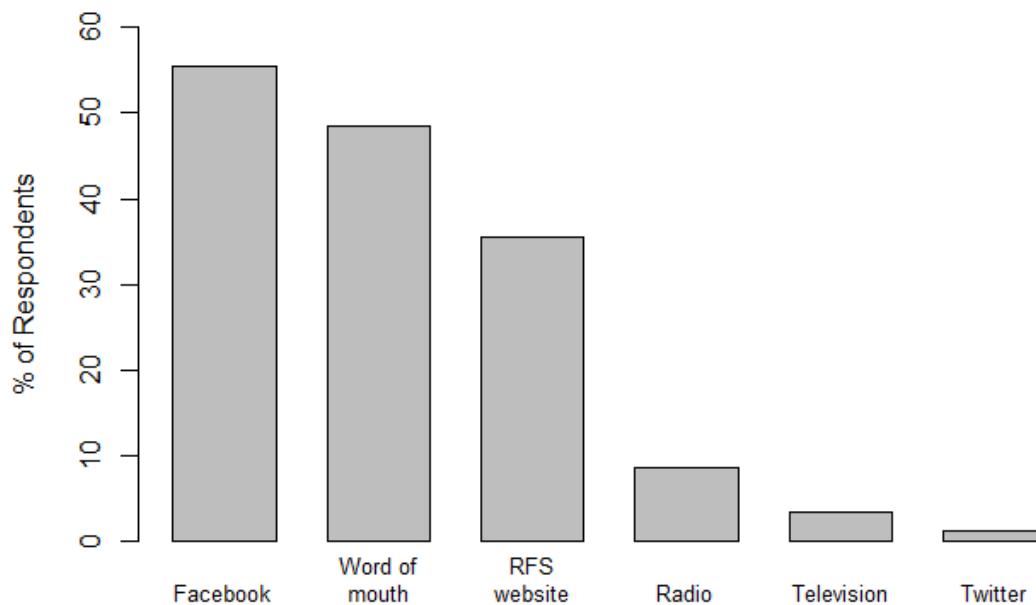


Figure 59 Ways in which respondents found out about the community meetings (Q103).

Respondents were also asked a set of questions specifically about the usefulness and accessibility of community meetings. A total of 200 respondents answered these questions. In response to "Was the information useful?", the majority of respondents said yes (176, 88%) (Figure 60). A smaller majority said that the information provided at the community meetings helped them decide what to do (137, 69%). Just

over a third said that they had difficulty seeing or hearing (71, 36%) and only a small number said that the “location was difficult to reach” (9, 5%).

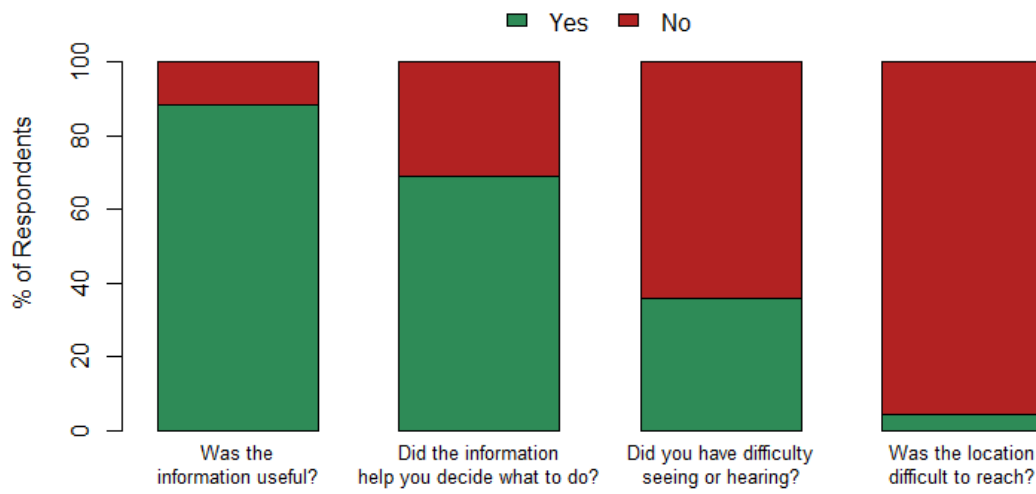


Figure 60 Responses to questions related to the Community meetings (Q104).

## NSW RFS MEDIA BRIEFINGS

A total of 413 respondents answered the question that asked whether they had watched / listened to any of the live television updates from the NSW RFS throughout the October fires. The vast majority of respondents said yes (372, 90%) they had (Figure 61). Of the 392 respondents who answered the next question about how they accessed these briefings, the majority of respondents chose "Television" (344, 88%). The two other options were much lower and very similar: Radio (75, 19%) and Internet stream (71, 18%).

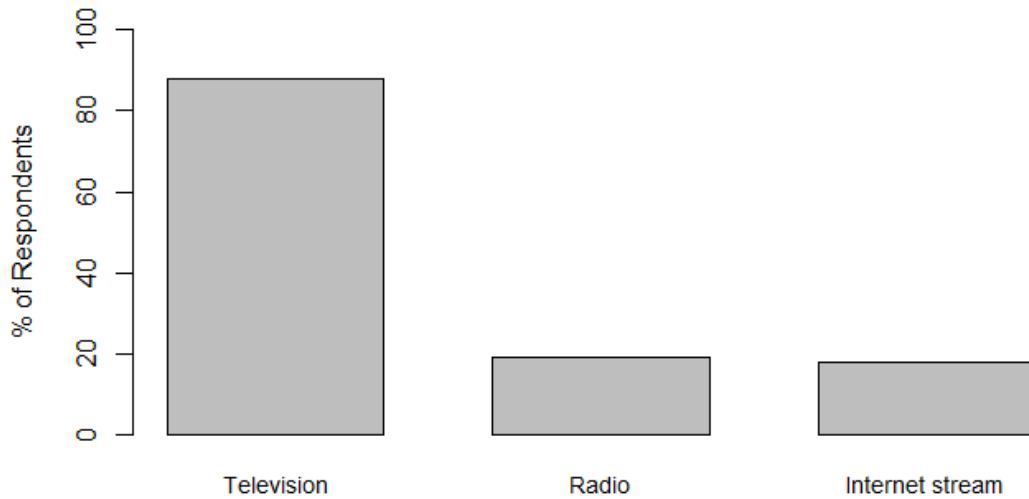


Figure 61 Methods of accessing NSW RFS media briefings during the October 2013 fires (Q106).

Of the 371 respondents who answered the next question asking them to describe the briefings, the majority (>73%) of respondents described the NSW RFS media briefings as "Useful", "Easy to understand", "Sufficient local information", "Accurate", "Timely", and "Relevant" (Figure 62).

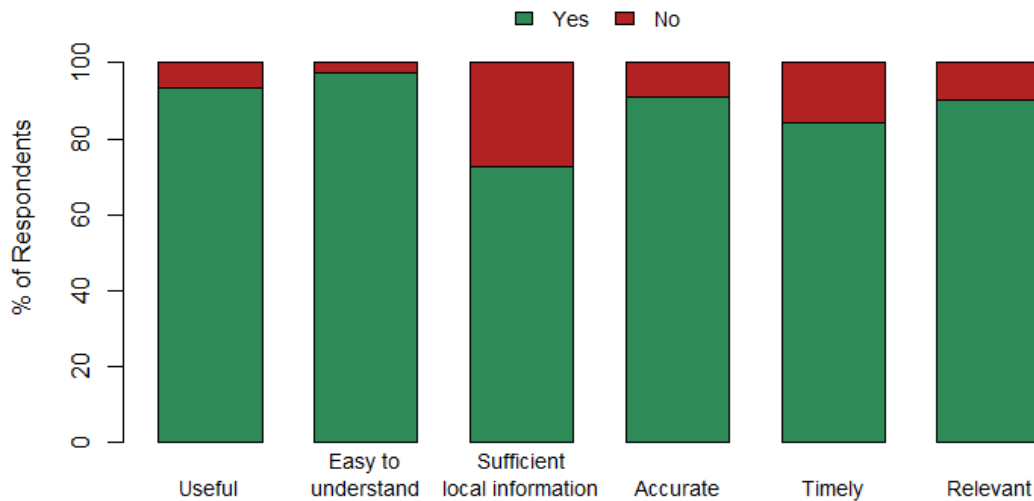


Figure 62 Survey response to "How would you describe the (RFS media) briefings?" (Q107).

## FURTHER COMMENTS

There were over 200 comments provided in the “Any further comments” free-text box and a complete list of these are provided in Appendix C. While a diverse range of comments were provided, there a number of important themes.

Firstly, there was a very large number of comments that support the work of the NSW RFS in general, and specifically over the period of the October 2013 fires. These people were extremely grateful for the help provided by NSW RFS volunteers and staff in protecting their properties.

Secondly, there were a large number of NSW RFS volunteers that raised grievances about operational matters during the October 2013 fires and/or in the pre-season approach to fuel treatments. It was never the intention of this survey to address these issues. However, the points raised by volunteers may be of interest to the NSW RFS.

Thirdly, a number of residents raised further concerns about the delays in receiving warnings during the fires, or not receiving them at all. Similarly, there were concerns about messaging not being sufficiently local. However, given the responses to the previous section on messaging these people are in the minority.

---

## CONCLUSIONS

Through the online survey we have been able to gather significant data covering a broad range of areas including preparedness, risk perceptions, survival planning, actions on the day of the fires and corporate messaging. Results presented in the report are based on a basic analysis of the survey data. Data from the survey can be used for a more comprehensive analysis of particular topics of interest to the NSW RFS. These data stand alone as a valuable dataset but can also be combined with data collected on the “blue sheets” in semi-structured interviews funded by the NSW RFS following both the January 2013 and October 2013 fires. It is our understanding that such data may also be available from research conducted following house loss in Tasmania and Western Australia during bush fires in these states.

Analysis of the survey data has identified a number of areas which the NSW RFS are having significant impacts in affecting the behaviour of residents and other areas where attention may be required.

1. Understanding of preparedness information in the communities affected is relatively high, however many residents still question the value of a written Bush Fire Survival Plan;
2. The majority of those that have prepared a Bush Fire Survival Plan have actively sought information from NSW RFS website or local volunteers;
3. Generally, NSW RFS terminology is well understood indicating a successful education campaign. However, the term Neighbourhood Safer Place is the exception. More work may be needed at the local scale to make residents aware of the term and the locality of their nearest Neighbourhood Safer Place;
4. A high number of residents returned to their house when they heard of the fire, rather than staying away. Without additional information about the specific circumstances, research suggests that this a high risk strategy (Haynes *et al.*, 2010; Bianchi *et al.*, 2012);
5. It is a positive sign that most residents who left early would do so again even when their house wasn't directly threatened;
6. Many households had some or all residents stay to defend their property because it was considered safe to do so. Only a small proportion of respondents reported damage, so this decision was reinforced by the circumstances;
7. Prior to and during fires, the NSW RFS website is generally seen as a reliable source of up to date and localised information;
8. Facebook pages of the NSW RFS and local brigades are considered a useful medium for transmitting up to date information;
9. Recorded telephone messages or text messages are the preferred medium for transmitting emergency warnings, with social media ranked poorly; and
10. The quality, timing, local nature and value of information provided throughout the emergency were ranked highly across all mediums.

---

## REFERENCES

- Blanchi, R., Leonard, J., Haynes, K., Opie, K., James, M., Kilinc, M., Dimer de Oliveira, F. and Van Den Honert, R. (2012). Life and house loss database description and analysis. *CSIRO, Bushfire CRC report to the Attorney General's Department*. Melbourne, Australia: CSIRO.
- Bushnell, S., Balcombe, L. and Cottrell, A. (2007). Community and fire service perceptions of bushfire issues in Tamborine Mountain: what's the difference? *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management* **22**, 3-9.
- Eriksen, C. (2013). Engaging Women with Bushfire Safety Issues *Geographical Research* **51**.
- Haynes, K., Handmer, J., McAneney, J., Tibbits, A. and Coates, L. (2010). Australian bushfire fatalities 1900–2008: exploring trends in relation to the 'Prepare, stay and defend or leave early' policy *Environmental Science & Policy* **13**, 185-194.
- Jakes, P., Kruger, L., Monroe, M. C., Nelson, K. C. and Sturtevant, V. (2007). Improving Wildfire Preparedness: Lessons from Communities across the U.S. *Human Ecology Review* **14**, 188-197.
- Matthew, S. C., Yoshitaka, K., Steven, E. D., John, C. B. and John, A. E. (2004). Causal Reasoning Processes of People Affected by Wildfire: Implications for Agency-Community Interactions and Communication Strategies *Western Journal of Applied Forestry* **19**, 184-194.
- O'Neill, S. J. and Handmer, J. (2012). Responding to bushfire risk: the need for transformative adaptation *Environmental Research Letters* **7**, 014018.
- Tibbits, A. and Whittaker, J. (2007). Stay and defend or leave early: Policy problems and experiences during the 2003 Victorian bushfires *Environmental Hazards* **7**, 283-290.
- Whittaker, J., Haynes, K., Handmer, J. and McLennan, J. (2013). Community safety during the 2009 'Black Saturday' bushfires: an analysis of household preparedness and response *International Journal of Wildland Fire* **in press**.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Post Bush Fire Interview Checklist



**Bushfire CRC Post Bushfire Interview Checklist  
NSW October 2013 Bushfires**

Pre-interview check:  Participant Information Statement?  Consent Form?  Recorder on?

Note that this is intended as a quick brief summary of what emerges during the course of the interview, which is to be conducted by the lead interviewer following the Interview Guide. It is NOT intended as a source of supplementary interview questions. It is NOT intended as a second set of questions to ask at the end of the interview. Interview team members should discuss their summary as soon as possible so as to complete as much as you can—if uncertain, record your best guess where you can. Numbers (1 – 13) refer to the relevant Sections of the Interview Guide. N/A means not applicable.

**ASSISTANT COMPLETES THIS PAGE WHILE INTERVIEWER BRIEFS INTERVIEWEES**

<b>Interviewer's name:</b>	<b>RFS representative's name:</b>
<b>Names of interviewees:</b>	
<b>Date:</b> ____/____/2013 <b>Time:</b> ____am/pm	<b>Recorder id:</b> ____ <b>Folder:</b> ____ <b>File #:</b> ____

**Information about the house and surrounds**

Interviewees address in the fire area (it might be a holiday house):

\_\_\_\_\_

Is the property inside the burnt perimeter (i.e. surrounded by burnt area):  Inside     On the edge     Outside

**Which of the following best describes the property?**

- House on a residential-size block
- House on small acreage (<10ha / 20 acres)
- House on large acreage (>10 / 20 acres)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ Size if specified \_\_\_\_\_ Hectares/Acres

**Estimate of fine fuel load within 10m of home:**  
 Heavy     Medium     Light     Unknown

**RFS assistant's bushfire risk assessment of the home:**  
 No risk     Low risk     Medium risk     High risk

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Bushland abuts the house block on how many sides (0-4)? \_\_\_\_\_

- OR Nearest bushland is:
- 1 house block away
  - Across a road, railway or other break
  - 1 house block + road, railway or other break
  - 100-300m away
  - 300-600m away
  - 600-1000m away
  - More than 1km away

**INTERVIEW COMMENCES ON THIS PAGE:**

1. First, have you participated in any other research interviews or surveys relating to the bushfires since the October fires?

Have they participated in other research interviews or surveys for these fires?  Yes  No

If Yes, what were they? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Now, do you mind if we get some basic information. Who usually lives here, and who was here on the day of the fire?

- Gender (of the interviewees only)
- Approximate age
- Employed > 20 hrs/wk
- Disabled
- Elderly & frail
- Pets
- Poultry
- Livestock

Household composition (not necessarily at home on the day)?

Occupant	Participating in interview	Sex (M/F)	Approx age	Present on the day of the fire	Employed >20 hrs/wk	Incapacitated (eg broken ankle) or disabled	Frail elderly
Respondent	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spouse or life partner	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #1	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #2	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #3	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #4	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #5	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #6	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #7	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #8	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #9	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other #10	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

On the day of the fire, were they responsible for any dependents at home?  Yes  No

If Yes, numbers: Under 12 \_\_\_\_\_ 12 and over \_\_\_\_\_ Frail elderly \_\_\_\_\_ Disabled or incapacitated \_\_\_\_\_

Did they have pets?  Yes  No

(Budgies, goldfish, cats, dogs, ponies etc.)

What were they? \_\_\_\_\_

Was poultry a concern?  Yes  No  N/A

Was livestock a concern?  Yes  No  N/A

3. How long have you lived at this address?

How long have they lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_ (years )

4. Is this your main home or a holiday house?

Main home  Holiday house

5. Do you own, rent or manage the residence?

What is the ownership of the property?

- Householder owns house (with or without a mortgage)
- Householder rents the house
- Householder manages property for absentee owner (house included in package)

6. What insurance did you have for:

- House?
- Contents?
- Vehicles?
- Farm?

Insurance:

- House**       Fully Insured    Underinsured    Have no insurance    N/A    Not Mentioned
- Contents**    Fully Insured    Underinsured    Have no insurance    N/A    Not Mentioned
- Vehicles**    Fully Insured    Underinsured    Have no insurance    N/A    Not Mentioned
- Farm**         Fully Insured    Underinsured    Have no insurance    N/A    Not Mentioned

Any comments about farm insurance \_\_\_\_\_

7. Previous experience of fire?

- Actively defended a property from fire?
  - Why did you decide to do that at that time?
  - If so, what was the outcome?
  - Why do you think that was the outcome?
- *Winmalee only: Were you threatened on Tues 24 Sept?*
  - *Did that influence your decisions before the October fires?*

Previous experience of a bushfire?

- No     Seen but not defended     Actively defended property

If so, when \_\_\_\_\_ and where \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If in Winmalee;** Did you feel threatened by the previous fire on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Sept?     Yes    No    N/A (not nearby)

Influence on decisions before the October fires? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Are you a current or previous member of NSW RFS or a Community Fire Unit?
- If not a current member, why not?
  - Other family members who are previous or current NSW RFS members?

Is interviewee a previous or current member of NSW RFS?  Previous  Current  Never

If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Is interviewee a previous or current member of a Community Fire Unit?  Previous  Current  Never

If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Are other family members previous or current members of NSW RFS?  Previous  Current  Never

9. What were the main reasons you came to live here in this particular community?
- Why this kind of property (e.g. bushland retreat, suburban block etc.)?

**Reasons for living in this community**

Reasons \_\_\_\_\_

10. What sort of a community would you say it is? ( e.g. is it a strongly linked community, networked, do people know their neighbours etc., would others help you out if needed)

**(Tick ONE only)**

- Strongly linked (Socialise)
- Networked (Cooperate without necessarily socialising)
- People know their neighbours
- Help each other (when needed)
- Not much interaction between people

11. When you first came to live here how concerned were you about the possibility of a bushfire threatening your home?
- Did you think you and your family would be at risk?
  - Why or why not?

**When they came to live here, how much did they think their home and property was at risk from bushfire?**

- Hadn't thought about it
- No risk at all
- Minimal risk
- Medium risk
- High risk

**When they came to live here, how much did they think their family was at risk from bushfire?**

- Hadn't thought about it
- No risk at all
- Minimal risk
- Medium risk
- High risk

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

11.1. If you decided you should make a plan, what were your reasons? (...regardless of whether they actually made a plan) (*Tick all that apply*).

N/A Never decided to make a plan

**What made them decide they *should* make a plan:**

**Prompts:**

- Ads on TV  
 Advice from family  
 Advice from friends  
 Advice from RFS social media (Twitter/Facebook)

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Concerns and factors**

- Survival of self                       Knew road would be cut off                       Had children in their care  
 Survival of family                       Knew road would be blocked by traffic                       Asthmatic in household  
 Survival of pets                       Did not have home prepared  
 Loss of property or home                       Had to care for frail/elderly in their home  
 Loss of stock                       Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11.2. Who started the discussion?

- Self    Partner    Child (age) \_\_\_\_\_    Other relative:    Other

12. In the days before the fire, how concerned were you about the possibility of a bushfire threatening your home?

- Did you think you and your family would be at risk?
- Do you think that others living in this area had a similar attitude towards bushfires as you?

In the days before the fire, how much did they think their home and property was at risk from bushfire?

- Hadn't thought about it    No risk at all    Minimal risk    Medium risk    High risk

In the days before the fire, how much did they think their family was at risk from bushfire?

- Hadn't thought about it    No risk at all    Minimal risk    Medium risk    High risk

Did others in the community have a similar attitude about risk?    Yes    No    Don't know

13. At the time the fire started, did you (and your family) have a plan for what to do during a bushfire?

- If no plan, why not?

If they had a plan:

- When did they first make a plan?
- At the time the fire started, was your plan written down?
- What was your plan?
- Was it based on the RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan document?
- Was your plan discussed among the occupants/family?
- Who initiated discussion of your plan (husband/wife/children)?
- What triggered discussion of your plan within the household?
- What made you decide you *should* make a plan and how did you proceed?
- Practiced or rehearsed?
- Main reasons you decided on this plan?
- Were you responsible for dependents or pets?
- If yes, was provision made for them in their bushfire survival plan?

- Did your plan cover the possibility of a fire starting mid-week?
- Did they use any RFS resources to help develop their plan?
- *If in Winmalee, did they attend community meeting after 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. fire?*

Did they have a plan?  Written  Unwritten  No plan  
 If NO PLAN, why not?

---

**IF they had a plan:**

Was it based on the RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan?  Yes  No  N/A (no plan)

**What was the plan?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay and defend ( <b>unambiguous</b> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> Some household members leave early, others stay and defend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wait and see how bad it is then decide | <input type="checkbox"/> No concrete plan   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole family leaves early*             | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter in place (passively)                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole household leaves early           |   |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Any gender differences  Yes  No

Discussed among occupants?  Yes  No

Who initiated discussion of their plan?  Husband  Wife  Other \_\_\_\_\_

What triggered discussion of their plan? \_\_\_\_\_

Was it practiced or rehearsed?  Yes  No

Did they have a backup plan?  Yes  No

Did their fire plan differ from their partner's?  Yes  No

Did their plan identify a place of last resort?  Yes  No

Did their plan make provision for:  
 Dependents?  Yes  No

Pets?  Yes  No

Did plan consider a fire starting mid-week  Yes  No

**Did they use any NSW RFS resources to help prepare their bushfire survival plan?**

Household Assessment Tool  Yes  No

Bushfire Survival Plan booklet  Yes  No

Prepare Your Property Checklist  Yes  No

RFS YouTube videos  Yes  No

**Main reason for plan:**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of self         | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be cut off                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Had children in their care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of family       | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be blocked by traffic            | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthmatic in household     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of pets         | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have home prepared                       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of property or home | <input type="checkbox"/> Had to care for frail/elderly in their home      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of stock            | <input type="checkbox"/> Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home |   |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Winmalee only, did they attend community meeting after 24<sup>th</sup> Sept fire?**  Yes  No  N/A

How useful was it? \_\_\_\_\_



14. What general bushfire information do you recall receiving in the 12 months prior to the fire? (i.e. not related specifically to this fire)

- What were the main sources of information you used for making these preparations?
- What influenced your decisions about preparation?
  - RFS information?
  - Media?
  - Past fires?
  - Neighbours?
  - Common sense?
- In the last year, do you recall receiving material by the RFS about bushfire safety?
  - The “Bushfire Survival Plan Guide”?
- How useful did you find this information and why?

**In the 12 months prior to the fire do they remember receiving any bushfire advice or information via:** (Tick ONE only)

- None
  Television
  Newspaper
  Letterbox drops
  Radio
  Local Volunteers
  Social Media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)

**Had they obtained a copy of the Bush Fire Survival Plan booklet from RFS?** (Tick ONE only)

- No
  From website
  At community meetings
  From fire station or Fire Control Centre

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What general sources of bushfire messages/warnings did they know about? (tick as many as they mention)**

- None  
 Information about what to do around the home  
 Bush Fire Survival Plan booklet  
 Bushfire Alerts  
 Advertising on TV, radio, newspapers, billboards etc.  
 Fire Danger Ratings  
 Prepare, Act Survive  
 Bushfire Alerts  
 Sirens on fire trucks  
 Radio news reports  
 RFS Total Fire Bans  
 RFS Fire Danger Map  
 Apps like Fires Near Me app

**Did any of these information sources influence how they prepared for a possible bushfire?**

- Rural Fire Service
  Media
  Past fire
  Common Sense
  None

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How useful did you find this information and why?**

How useful and why? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Did you know about a Neighbourhood Safer Place, or another alternate safer location where you could take ‘last resort’ shelter?

**Did they know where a Neighbourhood Safer Place was?**  Yes  No  N/A (there is no nearby NSP)

Did they know of any other safer location where they could take last resort shelter?  Yes  No

Location/description of Neighbourhood Safer Place or other safer shelter location:

\_\_\_\_\_

16. What did 'being prepared' for a bushfire mean for you?
- What actions had you taken to prepare to protect your home and your family from bushfires?

**What did 'being prepared' for a bushfire mean for them? (tick as many as they mention, but if Action taken, do not tick the corresponding intention)**

Intended to..	Actions taken	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a plan in mind – just knowing what to do
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtained the Bushfire Survival Plan kit from NSW RFS
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wrote a Bush Fire Survival Plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Practiced their Bush Fire Survival Plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing bushfire risk with family or others in the house
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing fire risk with neighbours
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Installed the Fires Near Me app on their phone or tablet
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Installed a bushfire sprinkler system
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had a water supply independent of the mains
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had a power supply independent of the mains (e.g. generator or solar cells)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had protective clothing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had a clear space around the house
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had cleared the gutters
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had a safe destination and evacuation route mapped out
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Got involved with a Community Fire Unit in the street
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Had a "go" kit ready to leave with

Other. Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

17. When was your community first threatened by the recent fires? Can you think back to the day before the fire came closest to your home? What fire danger weather predictions or warnings do you recall about the NEXT day, the day the fire came closest to your home?

**On the day (or period) before the fire came closest to their home, what warnings do they remember?**

**Fire Danger Rating**

- None (specifically mentioned)  
 Catastrophic  
 Severe  
 Extreme  
 Very High

**Other Warnings**

- None mentioned  
 Total Fire Ban  
 A Bushfire Alert  
 Advice  
 Watch and Act  
 Emergency Alert

18. In the days before the fire, what preparations did you make for a possible bushfire?
- What were the main sources of information you used for making these preparations?
  - Why did you choose to do these things?

**Preparatory Actions Taken in the days before the bushfire came closest to their property** (Tick all that apply)  N/A

<input type="checkbox"/> Turned on radio for info	<input type="checkbox"/> Telephoned friends/neighbours/family	<input type="checkbox"/> Collected valuables to take to safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Turned on TV for info	<input type="checkbox"/> Turned on sprinklers + generators	<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for safety of pets/livestock
<input type="checkbox"/> Looked on the NSW RFS website	<input type="checkbox"/> Went on Facebook or Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/> Blocked gutters and filled with water
<input type="checkbox"/> Looked on another website	<input type="checkbox"/> Organised protective clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Emailed friends/neighbours/family
<input type="checkbox"/> Call emergency authorities (fire/police)	<input type="checkbox"/> Go back inside home and wait and see what happens	<input type="checkbox"/> Return to home (if away from home at the time of the fire)
<input type="checkbox"/> Travel somewhere to be better able to see where the fire is	<input type="checkbox"/> Stayed home from work	<input type="checkbox"/> Did nothing directly because of the fire

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose to do these things? \_\_\_\_\_

19. When did you first find out about the fire threat?

- Where were you at the time?
- How did you first find out about the fire?
- When you first knew about the fire, how concerned were you about possible danger for you and your family?
- What would you say was your main worry initially?
- What did you decide to do about the fire initially?
- Why?

They first find out about the fire on (day/time/date) \_\_\_\_\_

Where were they at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

If not at home, did they try to get home?  Yes  No  N/A (already at home)

How did they find out about it?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saw smoke                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Smelt smoke                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saw flames                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Heard Siren                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RFS brigades radio                        | <input type="checkbox"/> RFS Fires Near Me app                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via TV          | <input type="checkbox"/> Contact from friends/neighbours/family        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via radio       | <input type="checkbox"/> Warned by police/SES/firefighters             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via web         | <input type="checkbox"/> Official warning via email, SMS or home phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Contact from friends/neighbours/family        |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Initial decision:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay and defend ( <b>unambiguous</b> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> Some household members leave early, others stay and defend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wait and see how bad it is then decide | <input type="checkbox"/> No concrete plan   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whole family leaves early*             |   |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

What information did you use to make that initial decision?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire danger rating sign | <input type="checkbox"/> Total Fire Ban sign     | <input type="checkbox"/> None                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RFS website             | <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Met website   | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire danger rating in newspaper      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media            | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone call from friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Other website _____                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio                   | <input type="checkbox"/> In person from neighbours or friends |
|  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't pay much attention             |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Level of concern

- Not concerned at all  
 Slightly concerned  
 Moderately concerned  
 Very concerned

Main worry:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of self         | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be cut off                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Had children in their care                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of family       | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be blocked by traffic        | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthmatic in household <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of pets         | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have home prepared                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of property or home | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of frail/elderly in their home      |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of stock            | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of frail/elderly living out of home |  |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

20. Walk me through the main things that happened on the day the fire came closest to, or damaged your home, and what you decided to do as the day unfolded.

- Did you ever think the fire posed a serious threat to your home?
  - When did you decide that? Why?
- When did the fire come closest to your home?
- Where were you at the time?
  - If away, did you try to get home?
  - Did you succeed in getting home?
  - What slowed you down or prevented you?
- Which members of the household were home?
- Were you expecting a warning?
- What warnings do they remember getting on the day?
- What made you aware that the fire was close?
- What were your initial intentions?
- How long before the fire arrived did you take decisive action?
- What did you initially decide to do?
  - Why did you decide to do that?
  - Who made the decision to do that?
- What did you ultimately end up doing?
  - Why did you decide to do that?
  - Who made the decision to do that?
- How prepared do they think they were?
  - Why?
- Did the fires injure or kill any of your pets, poultry or livestock?

*(INTERVIEWER: your aim is to get a narrative of the significant events which occurred for the interviewee. Pay particular attention to: (a) warnings and information about the fire, official and unofficial: media warnings, calls/texts/visits from family, friends, neighbours, agencies; and TRIGGERS FOR ACTION such as smoke, embers, (b) the effects of these items of information—how they changed the interviewee’s understanding of the situation, and the risks and concerns; (c) decisions about what to do; and (d) actions taken. IN PARTICULAR: BE ALERT TO FOLLOW-UP ISSUES OF COMMUNICATION, ESPECIALLY WARNINGS AND SOCIAL MEDIA/INFLUENCERS.*

Did they think the fire posed a serious threat to their home? When did they decide that? (day/date/time) Why?

---

Where were they when the fire came closest to their home? \_\_\_\_\_

If they were away from home, did they try to get home?  Yes  No If yes, did they succeed?  Yes  No

**Which members of the household were home at the time the fire came closest (include numbers)?**

- None, or
  - Self
  - Spouse or partner
  - Other non-dependent adults aged 18 and over \_\_\_\_\_
  - Dependents 13 to 17 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Dependents 12 and under \_\_\_\_\_
  - Dependents Frail Elderly \_\_\_\_\_
  - Dependents Disabled \_\_\_\_\_

Were they expecting a warning?  Yes  No If Yes, what sort of warning?

---

**On the day the fire came closest to their home, what warnings do they remember?**

**Fire Danger Rating**

- None (specifically mentioned)
- Catastrophic
- Severe
- Extreme
- Very High

**Other Warnings**

- Total Fire Ban
- Emergency warning
- Bushfire Alert
- Advice
- Watch and Act

**How long before the fire came closest to their home did they take decisive action?**  N/A

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several days before</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The day before</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The night before</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On the morning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Before the roads got too busy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Before they saw smoke</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> After they saw smoke</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As soon as burning embers started falling around the home</li> </ul> | <p>Before the fire got:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> within 5 kms of home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1 km of home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 500m of home</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 10m of home</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

**What triggered their decision?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What made them aware that the fire was getting close to their home? (may be different to q.19, when they heard about the fire, which could be days earlier)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Saw smoke</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Saw flames</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> RFS brigades radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via TV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via radio</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Received official warning via web</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smelt smoke</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Heard Siren</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> RFS Fires Near Me app</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact from friends/neighbours/family</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Warned by police/SES/firefighters</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Official warning via email, SMS or home phone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact from friends/neighbours/family</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What did they decide to do about the fire initially?**

If away from home when they became aware of the fire:

- Return to the house  Wanted to return but kept away by road blocks  Voluntarily stay away until safe to return

If at home when they became aware of the fire:

- Leave their house immediately
- To wait and see
- Ring family and friends to warn them
- Look for more information
- Get ready to leave
- Enact their fire plan
- Get ready to defend their house
- I did nothing

Why did you choose this? \_\_\_\_\_

**Why did they decide to do that?**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of self         | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be cut off                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Had children in their care     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of family       | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be blocked by traffic        | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthmatic in household         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of pets         | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have home prepared                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident of their own ability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Loss of property or home | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of frail/elderly in their home      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Loss of stock            | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of frail/elderly living out of home |   |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Who made the decision to do that?**

- Self  
 Partner  
 Child: age  
 Person caring for child at the time: Who \_\_\_\_\_  
 School  
 Other

Any gender differences  Yes  No If yes, describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Ultimate action on day** (tick one only)

- Not at home just by chance  
 Left well before fire impact  
 Not at home — deliberate decision based on predicted fire danger weather  
 Unsuccessful attempt to defend home  
 Successful attempt to defend home  
 Left just in time  
 Took last-resort shelter  
 At home, NOT impacted

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Why did they decide on the actions ultimately taken that day?**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of self         | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be cut off              | <input type="checkbox"/> Had children in their care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of family       | <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be blocked by traffic   | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthmatic in household     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Survival of pets         | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have home prepared              |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Loss of property or home | <input type="checkbox"/> Survival of frail/elderly in their home |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern: Loss of stock            | Survival of frail/elderly living out of home                     |   |

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Any gender differences  Yes  No If yes, describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Who made the decision to take the actions ultimately taken that day?**

- Self  
 Partner  
 Child: age  
 Person caring for child at the time: Who \_\_\_\_\_  
 School  
 Other

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**How prepared do they think they were for the recent bushfires?**

- Well prepared  
 Adequately prepared  
 Not very well prepared  
 Not prepared at all

**If they felt they were not prepared, why was this?**

- It cost too much
- Didn't have the time
- Didn't know what to do
- Would be told what to do when the fire comes
- There are too many rules and regulations
- It's not their responsibility
- Didn't think it would make any difference
- Didn't think it was necessary

**21. Did any household members leave your home when they fire threatened?**

- If so, who left?
- When? Why?
- How did they travel (by car, on foot)?
- Was travel hazardous (smoke, fire, falling trees or powerlines)?
- How long were they away?
- Where did they go?
- Looking back, do you think relocating was the right decision?

**EVACUATION****Did any household members leave the home?**

- N/A (nobody home)     Yes (whole household)     Yes (some of household only)     No

**If they left their home, what were the key trigger(s) that made them decide to leave? (number in order mentioned)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Could see/smell smoke                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Advice from friends/family members   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Could see flames in the distance                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Advice from neighbours   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Could see flames close by                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Received an Emergency Alert telephone warning                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heard/saw helicopters/aircraft                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Received official emergency warning about fire, other than Emergency Alert   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home caught fire   | <input type="checkbox"/> Had completed all defensive actions (i.e. felt they had done all they could) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct advice to relocate from police/emergency services | <input type="checkbox"/> Option to relocate suggested by police/emergency services                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |   |

**How did they travel? (tick one)**

- Walked
- Own car
- Neighbours' or friends' car
- Transported by emergency services
- Taken by strangers

**Was travel along the route hazardous, if so why? (tick all that apply)**

- No
- Poor visibility due to smoke
- Close to the fire
- Fallen trees, branches or powerlines
- More dangerous than staying at home

**If they evacuated during the recent fires was it? (tick one)**

- For a few hours
- Overnight
- 1-2 days
- For more than two days but less than a week
- More than a week

**If they evacuated during the recent fires where did they go? (tick any mentioned)**

Relocated to (location): \_\_\_\_\_

- Family, friends or neighbours house close by
- Family, friends or neighbours within 5 kilometres of home
- Family, friends or neighbours more than 5 kilometres of home
- Community place (eg shopping centre) well away from bushland
- Evacuation centre
- Neighbourhood Safer Place (RFS designated)

**If they evacuated during the recent fires, looking back, did they think (tick any mentioned)**

- It was unnecessary and if there's a next time they won't
- It was unnecessary but if there's a next time they would do it again
- It was the right thing to do
- It was necessary but if there's a next time they won't do it because it was so inconvenient
- It was necessary (although inconvenient) and if there's a next time they would do it again
- Not a problem and they'd do it again

**22. Did any household members stay at the home?**

- Who stayed?
- Why did they end up staying?
- Did any household members return home to defend?
  - Who, when and why?
- If you were home when the fire came closest, were you alone?
  - If others were present, who else?
- Did those who stayed actively defend or shelter in place (passively)?
- Of those who actively defended, if any:
  - Were they able to help others? Who? How?
  - What equipment did they use to defend the home?
  - What actions did they undertake in defending your home?
    - How long were they defending?
- If they sheltered in place (passively)?
  - Why?
  - Where did they shelter?
  - How many exit points were there from their place of shelter?
- Did those at home get help from others? If so, who?

**STAYED AT THE HOME****Did any members of the household stay at the home?****Who stayed?**

- All of household                       Some of household                       None of household    [If 'No', go to question 25]

**Why did they end up staying?**  N/A nobody stayed

- Decided it was safe     Left it too late and could not leave     Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Did any members of the household return home to defend?****Who?**

- All of household                       Some of household                       None of household    [If 'No', go to question 25]

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**If interviewee was at home when fire closest, were they alone?**  N/A (Interviewee not home)

- Yes                       No

If others were present, who? \_\_\_\_\_



**Did they actively defend or shelter (passively)?**

- Actively defended       Sheltered (passively)

Were they able to help others?

- No     Yes

Who & how? \_\_\_\_\_

**What equipment was used to defend the house and/or property?**  N/A

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water from pool, spa, dam or tank                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Protective clothing                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile water supply (e.g. tank trailer or tank on a ute) | <input type="checkbox"/> Long sleeved shirt and pants (cotton) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tractor (slashing or ploughing to clear ground)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden hose  | <input type="checkbox"/> Goggles                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden sprinkler   | <input type="checkbox"/> Boots                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting water pump                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dust mask or cloth over mouth & nose  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting hose/nozzles                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Wool blanket                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bushfire sprinkler system                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Helmet                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mops and buckets   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ladders  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden tools (such as rakes and shovels)                 |  |

**What actions did they take in defending their home?**

- None

- Preventative wetting down objects

Putting out fire from embers:

- In vegetation around the home
- On the house
- On outbuildings

- Protecting the house from direct flame contact or radiant heat

- Putting out fire on the house arising from direct flame contact or radiant heat

How long did they undertake these tasks for? \_\_\_\_\_

**If they sheltered in place (passively):**

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**Where did they shelter?**

- In the house:
- A bathroom
  - A bedroom
  - Kitchen
  - Laundry
  - Study
  - Living room
  - Basement or cellar
- Garage
- A bushfire bunker
- Vehicle
- Open area
- Pool
- Water tank
- Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

**How many exit points were there from your place of shelter?** Internal \_\_\_\_\_ External \_\_\_\_\_

**Did they get any help defending their home? (tick all that apply)**

- No
- Family or friends (not from the household) deliberately came to help
- Firefighters or other emergency services assisted
- Community Fire Unit assisted
- Strangers assisted

**23. Was your home damaged or destroyed by the fire?**

- Property beyond the home?
- Vehicles?
- Caravans or motor homes?
- Firefighting equipment?
- Outbuildings?
- Garden?
- Pets?
- Poultry?
- Livestock?
- Did you lose any essential services during the period of the fire? (electricity, telecommunications, water)? How did this affect you?
- If the home was not damaged, why do you think this was?

**Was their home damaged or destroyed by the fire? (Tick one only)**

- House survived, no damage
- House survived, minor damage
- House survived but major damage
- House destroyed

**Any damage to property beyond their house?**

- No other property damage
- Garden damaged
- Minor other property damage
- Major other property damage

**Was there any damage to the following:**

Vehicle     Caravan/Motorhome     Water Tank     Pipes or hoses for firefighting

**Were any other structures (e.g. shed, garage, hot-houses) damaged/destroyed?**

No     Yes, If yes, please list \_\_\_\_\_

**Did the bushfires injure or kill any of their pets or livestock**

Pets	<input type="checkbox"/> Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> Killed	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (no pets)	Number killed _____
Poultry	<input type="checkbox"/> Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> Killed	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (no pets)	Number killed _____
Livestock	<input type="checkbox"/> Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> Killed	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (no livestock)	Number killed _____

**Did they lose any essential services during the period of the fire?**

Yes     No

If yes which services? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how did this affect them? \_\_\_\_\_

**Only ask the next two questions (23.1-23.2) if the relevant information has not been provided already.**

23.1. Looking back, what information about the fire was most important in making your final decision about what to do?

- If you went looking for further information, what did they use and how useful was it?
  - For official warnings via radio and web, did you find them:
    - Useful?
    - Timely?
    - Frequent enough?
  - If social media was used, who was the most relevant source?
    - Rural Fire Service social media etc.?
    - Family/friends via social media?
    - Strangers or other organisations via social media?

**Information they used to make their final decision about what to do? (tick all that apply)  N/A**

<input type="checkbox"/> Advice from family	<input type="checkbox"/> Advice from friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Advice from other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire danger rating sign	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Fire Ban sign	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire danger rating in newspaper
<input type="checkbox"/> RFS website	<input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Met website	<input type="checkbox"/> Other website _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone call from friends	<input type="checkbox"/> In person from neighbours or friends
<input type="checkbox"/> TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't pay much attention
	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Alert on mobile phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Alert on landline

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**If they went looking for more information on the day of the fire what did they use?  N/A**

'Trusted my gut'

Contacted an acquaintance in the fire brigade

Contacted family or friends

Local radio

Internet (Meteorological, RFS, news sites)

Television (Local news, Sky news, ABC, Commercial)

Referred to printed information (RFS pamphlets)

Rang the RFS Bush Fire Information Line

Social media

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Did they consider the RFS warning information (either/or)**  N/A

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient             | <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too soon               | <input type="checkbox"/> Too late                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alarmist               | <input type="checkbox"/> Not urgent enough       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficiently localised | <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough local detail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant               | <input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant to me      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Didn't need a map      | <input type="checkbox"/> Needed a map            |

**IF they mentioned official warnings via radio or Internet, did they describe them as?**  N/A didn't mention official warnings

**For radio:**

- |                 |                              |                             |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Useful          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Timely          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Right Frequency | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Specific enough | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

**For the Web**

- |                 |                              |                             |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Useful          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Timely          | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Right Frequency | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Specific enough | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**If social media was used, who was the most relevant source (pick one)**  N/A (didn't use social media)

	Facebook	Twitter	Other (specify)
Rural Fire Service (official)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Rural Fire Service (local brigade)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
NSW Fire Brigades (official)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
News services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Family or friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Other individuals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

**23.2. Did the OFFICIAL information provided about the fire help you to decide what to do?**

- Were there any problems with the information?
- What are your first and second preferred methods of receiving a warning?
- Why?

**Did OFFICIAL information about the fire help them make decisions:**  Yes  No  N/A (didn't receive any information)

**Was OFFICIAL information perceived as being:**  Missing  Wrong  Too late

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

**Any preferences for the type of warning?**  None

**First Preference**

- Radio
- TV
- Recorded message by phone
- Text message
- Twitter
- Other (specify)

**Any Apparent Second Preference**

- Radio
- TV
- Recorded message by phone
- Text message
- Facebook
- Other (specify)

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Why do you think your house survived?

- Knowing what you know now about the fire, what if anything would you have wanted to do differently?

Why do they think it survived? \_\_\_\_\_

Would they NOW do anything differently?  Yes  No

If yes, what would they have done differently? \_\_\_\_\_

25. *If not already answered:* A couple of follow up questions: Did you attend any community meetings during the fires? If “yes”:

- Where,
  - When?
  - How useful were these for you?
- If you didn’t attend and community meetings, why not?

No

**If yes:**

Where? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

**Useful?**

- |   |                              |                             |   |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Attended community meetings               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> There were none for our area |
| If Yes, were they useful?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A                          |
| Difficulty seeing or hearing              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A                          |
| Location difficult to reach               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A                          |
| Didn’t find out about it until afterwards | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A                          |
| Helped me to decide what to do            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A                          |

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

26. Did you watch on TV or listen on the radio to any of the NSW Rural Fire Service media briefings? If “yes”: How useful were these for you?

- |  |                              |                             |                             |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watched on TV           | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listened on radio       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watched Internet stream | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| If Yes to any, was it useful?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| Easy to understand                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| Sufficient local information                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| Accurate   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| Timely   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| Relevant   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> NA |

27. Anything else you think we should know about your experiences with the fire?

**Anything else you think we should know:**

---



---



---



## APPENDIX B

### Post Bush Fire Online Survey Questions

## NSW Bushfires October 2013: Capturing Community Members' Experiences

You are invited to participate in research being conducted by the University of Wollongong and La Trobe University for the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC) and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS). This joint project is being undertaken with the objective of improving community bushfire safety.

When bush fires occur it is important to learn as much as possible about the fires and people's experience of them. This project is being undertaken so that the NSW Rural Fire Service can develop a better understanding of how to improve community safety for the future. All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research.

A report about the fire and recommendations for improving community bush fire safety will be written for the NSW Rural Fire Service. Findings from the research may be reported at scientific conferences and in research journals. No identifiable material will be included in any reports.

If you have any further questions about the study you are welcome to contact Dr Trent Penman (University of Wollongong; email [tpenman@uow.edu.au](mailto:tpenman@uow.edu.au)), Dr Jim McLennan (La Trobe University; email: [J.McLennan@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:J.McLennan@latrobe.edu.au)); or Ms Lyndsey Wright (Bushfire CRC; email: [lyndsey.wright@bushfirecrc.com](mailto:lyndsey.wright@bushfirecrc.com)).

This study has been approved by the University of Wollongong Human Ethics Committee. If you have questions which Dr Trent Penman, Dr Jim McLennan or Ms Lyndsey Wright have been unable to answer to your satisfaction, or if you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Secretary, Human Ethics Committee, 02 4221 3386 or email [rso-ethics@uow.edu.au](mailto:rso-ethics@uow.edu.au). Please quote the application reference number HE13/456.

Thank you for taking the time to consider your participation in our research.



### **1. To participate in this online survey:**

- ~ **You must be over 18 years of age**
- ~ **Complete the survey by 31 March 2014**
- ~ **The survey takes approximately 20-40 minutes to complete**
- ~ **All questions are optional**
- ~ **All answers will remain confidential**
- ~ **As a participant you always have the right to cease participation at any time**

- By ticking this box you indicate that you are 18 years or older and have read the survey information provided above, that you agree to participate in this study, and that you consent to the data being used as described in the introductory note.
- I do not wish to proceed

## Recent surveys



## 2. Have you participated in any surveys about the October 2013 bush fires?

- Yes
- No

## 3. Please briefly describe the survey(s) you have been involved in

## Questions about you

Just a couple of quick questions about you

### 4. Are you?

- Female
- Male

### 5. What is your age?

- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 or older

### 6. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- Full time paid employment
- Part time/casual employment
- Full time domestic duties
- Full time student
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Not able to work

## Questions about the people you live with

We would like to ask some questions about the people that you live with

## 7. How best describes the people who usually live in your home or on this property?

- Sole resident
- Couple
- Couple with dependent children
- Single parent with dependent children
- Multiple families with dependent children
- Couple with adult children
- Single parent with adult children
- Multiple families with adult children
- Couple shared with older parent(s)
- Family shared with older parent(s)
- Other shared adult household

Other (please specify)

## 8. What is the usual number of people that live in your house in each of the following categories?

Adults (older than 65)	<input type="text"/>
Adults (19 to 65)	<input type="text"/>
Teenagers (13 to 18)	<input type="text"/>
Children 6 to 12 years	<input type="text"/>
Children 2 to 6 years	<input type="text"/>
Children < 2 years	<input type="text"/>

## Questions about your home and your community

We would like to ask some general details about your property and your values for the property

### 9. What is your address?

**Street Address:**

**Suburb:**

**Post Code:**

### 10. How long have you lived at this address?

Years

If multigenerational property, please indicate how many years it has been in your family

### 11. What type of residence is this for you?

- Main residence
- Secondary residence
- Holiday house

Other (please specify)

### 12. Do you own, rent or manage this property?

- Own (with or without a mortgage)
- Rent
- Manage

### 13. How best describes your property?

- House on a residential-size block
- House on small acreage (<10 ha / 20 acres)
- House on large acreage (>10 ha / 20 acres)

Other (please specify type and size)

### 14. Is your property adjacent to bushland?

- Yes
- No

## Questions about your home and your community

### 15. On how many sides of your property is there bushland?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

## Questions about your home and your community

### 16. How close is the nearest bushland?

- 1 house block away
- Across a road, railway or other break
- 1 house block + road, railway or other break
- 100-300m away
- 300-600m away
- 600-1000m away
- More than 1km away

## Property values

### 17. How would you describe your property? Please tick all that are applicable

- Predominantly rural
- Area with a rural history adjacent to an urban area
- Bushland adjacent to an urban area
- Urban or suburban
- Agricultural
- Commercial

Other (please specify)

**18. How would you describe your local area? Please tick all that are applicable**

- Predominantly rural
- Area with a rural history adjacent to an urban area
- Urban area surrounded by bushland
- Urban or suburban
- Farming, grazing or agricultural area
- Industrial area
- Commercial area
- Tourist area
- High natural/conservation value

Other (please specify)

**19. When you first moved to the area, how did you rate the threat of bush fire:**

	Extreme	Very high	High	Medium	Low	No threat
To your family?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To your property?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To your local area?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Questions about your home and your community**

**20. What was your main reason(s) for purchasing and/or moving to this property?**

	Very important	Important	Not important
Good environment to bring up children in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leafy neighbourhood close to amenities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To escape urban life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affordability of housing/cost of living	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operate a commercial farm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For work other than the above	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To be near family and/or friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Operate a commercial, industrial, tourism/hunting/fishing property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 21. What best describes the local community?

- People in the area regularly socialise and are friends
- People in the area generally get along and talk to one another
- People in the area generally know but don't talk to each other
- There is not much interaction between people

## Questions about pets and livestock

## 22. Do you have pets, poultry or livestock on your property?

- Yes
- No

## Questions about pets and livestock

## 23. How many of the following do you have?

Dogs	<input type="text"/>
Cats	<input type="text"/>
Fish	<input type="text"/>
Horses/Ponies	<input type="text"/>
Birds (other than chickens)	<input type="text"/>
Chickens	<input type="text"/>
Ducks	<input type="text"/>
Cattle	<input type="text"/>
Sheep	<input type="text"/>
Goats	<input type="text"/>
Alpacas	<input type="text"/>
Deer	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

## Questions about your previous experience with bush fire

We would like to ask about your experience with bush fire before September 2013

## 24. When did your local area last experience a bush fire?

- Don't know
- Within the last 12 months
- 1 - 5 years ago
- 6 - 10 years ago
- 11 - 15 years ago
- 16 - 20 years ago
- 20 - 25 years ago
- 25+ years ago
- Never

## 25. When did you personally last experience a bush fire?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Don't know                | <input type="radio"/> 16 - 20 years ago |
| <input type="radio"/> Within the last 12 months | <input type="radio"/> 20 - 25 years ago |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 - 5 years ago           | <input type="radio"/> 25+ years ago     |
| <input type="radio"/> 6 - 10 years ago          | <input type="radio"/> Never             |
| <input type="radio"/> 11 - 15 years ago         |   |

## 26. What direct personal experience with bush fires have you had? (tick all applicable answers)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have left early or evacuated due to bushfire    | <input type="checkbox"/> I am/have been a volunteer fire fighter       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have seen bushfire burning houses               | <input type="checkbox"/> My property (other than house) has been burnt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have seen fire on television ONLY               | <input type="checkbox"/> I have defended my own property               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am/have been a paid fire fighter                | <input type="checkbox"/> My home has been damaged                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have defended neighbouring property             | <input type="checkbox"/> I have seen bushfire burning                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have visited an area recently burnt by bushfire | <input type="checkbox"/> My home has been destroyed                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have smelled or seen bushfire smoke             | <input type="checkbox"/> No experience                                 |

## 27. If you have previously attempted to defend property from bush fire, what best describes the outcome?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Not applicable            | <input type="radio"/> Major damage to the house          |
| <input type="radio"/> Saved house (no damage)   | <input type="radio"/> House lost to the bush fire        |
| <input type="radio"/> Minor damage to the house | <input type="radio"/> House saved, but outbuildings lost |

Other (please specify)

## 28. Is anybody within the household a current or previous member of:

	Current	Previous	No
NSW Rural Fire Service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fire and Rescue NSW	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Fire Unit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Questions about preparing for bush fire

Here we would like to ask about the preparations you made prior to the fire

## 29. What insurance coverage do you have for fire?

	Fully insured	Partially insured	Not insured	Not applicable
House	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vehicles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 30. What have you done or intended to do to prepare the property from bush fire?

	Had done	Intended to	Felt unnecessary	Not considered
Having a plan in mind – just knowing what to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtained the Bush Fire Survival Plan kit from NSW RFS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wrote a Bush Fire Survival Plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practiced the Bush Fire Survival Plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussed bush fire risk with family or others in the house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussed fire risk with neighbours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Installed the Fires Near Me app on their phone or tablet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Installed a bushfire sprinkler system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had a water supply independent of the mains	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had a power supply independent of the mains (e.g. generator or solar cells)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had protective clothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had a clear space around the house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had cleared the gutters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had a safe destination and evacuation route mapped out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Got involved with a Community Fire Unit in the street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Had a "go" kit ready to leave with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>			

### Questions about your bush fire survival plan

Here we wish to ask you about how you planned for bush fire

**31. NSW RFS have a Bush Fire Survival Plan document which guides you through the process of making a plan. Have you seen or received a copy of this document? If so, where did you get it from?**

- No  At community meetings  
 Downloaded from the website  From fire station or Fire Control Centre

Other (please specify)



**32. Before October 2013, did you have a plan of what you would do in the event of a bush fire?**

- I/we had a written plan  I/we had a mental plan  I/we did not have a plan

**Questions about your bushfire survival plan**

**33. What best describes your households' plan?**

- All stay and defend  
 Some household members leave early, others stay and defend  
 Wait and see how bad it is then decide  
 Shelter in place (passively)  
 Whole family/household leaves early  
 No concrete plan



### 34. What made you decide you should make a plan?

- Concern about bush fire risk
- Ads on TV
- Advice from family
- Advice from friends
- Advice from RFS social media (Twitter/Facebook)
- Advice from RFS in the community
- Response to a school activity

Other (please specify)

### 35. Who initiated the development of the plan?

- Household decision     Male adult     Female adult     Child     Can't recall

Other (please specify)

### 36. What were your main concerns in developing a plan?

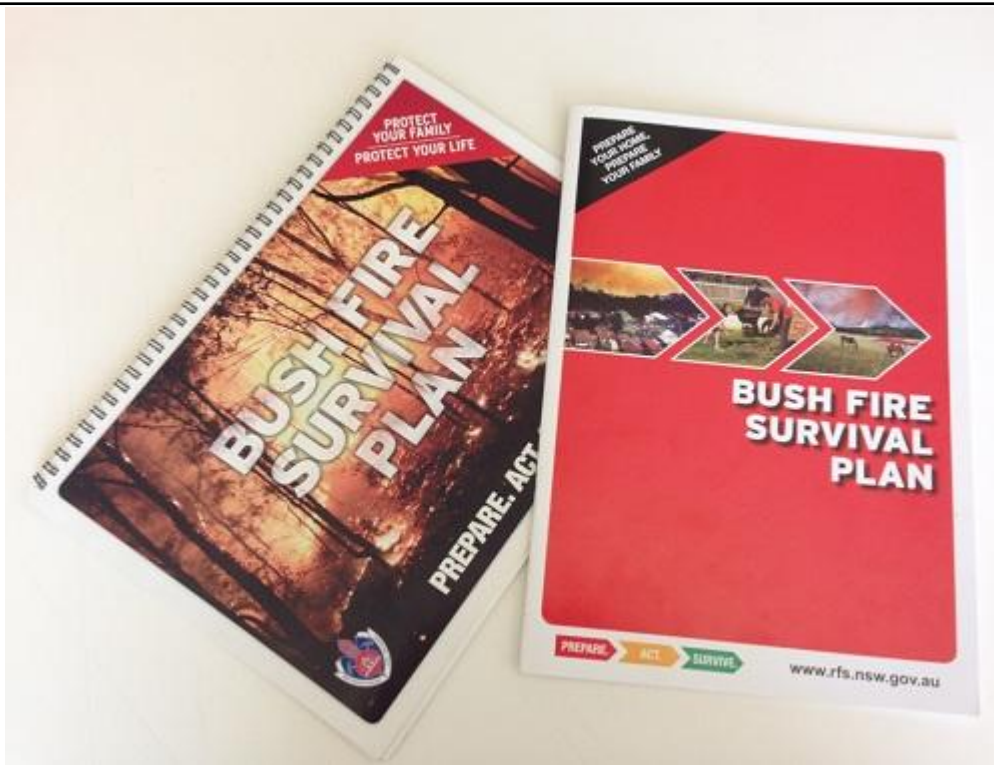
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting self/family                | <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have home prepared                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting pets                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Had to care for frail/elderly in our home        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of property or home              | <input type="checkbox"/> Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of stock                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Had children in their care                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be cut off            | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthmatic in household                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knew road would be blocked by traffic |   |

Other (please specify)

## Questions about your bush fire survival plan

### 37. Was the plan based on the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan?

- Yes     No



**38. What information did you use to prepare your plan?**

- NSW RFS Household Assessment Tool
- NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan booklet
- NSW RFS Prepare Your Property Checklist
- Information from family and friends
- Information in the media
- Common sense
- None of the above

Other (please specify)

### 39. Did the plan:

	Yes	No	N/A
Get discussed by the household?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get practiced or rehearsed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Include a backup plan?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differ between members of the household?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify a place of last resort?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make provision for children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make provision for adults that are elderly and immobile?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make provision for pets?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consider a fire starting mid-week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Questions about information you received before the fire

We would like to know about the information you received in the 12 months prior to the fire

#### 40. In the 12 months prior to the fire, which of the following do you recall providing information about preparing for bush fires? Tick all that apply

- None
- Television
- Newspaper
- Letterbox drops
- Radio
- Local Volunteers
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)
- Local council



**46. Can you think back to the days immediately BEFORE the fire came closest to your home, what fire danger weather predictions or warnings do you recall about the NEXT day?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot weather/high winds  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Danger Warnings | <input type="checkbox"/> State of Emergency      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Total Fire Ban       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other fires in the area |

Other (please specify)

**47. In the days immediately before the fire, what preparations did you make for a possible bush fire? Tick all that apply**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organised protective clothing  | <input type="checkbox"/> Arranged to be elsewhere on the day of high fire risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watched TV for fire information  | <input type="checkbox"/> Listened to radio for information                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed home from work  | <input type="checkbox"/> Made special arrangements for children                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Made special arrangements for elderly / frail / unwell household members | <input type="checkbox"/> Call emergency authorities (fire/police) for advice   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Checked Facebook or Twitter  | <input type="checkbox"/> Turned on sprinklers + generator                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arranged for safety of pets/livestock                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed home because of the fire threat                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looked on a website other than NSW RFS                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Blocked gutters and filled with water                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emailed friends/neighbours/family  | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephoned friends/neighbours/family                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looked on the NSW RFS website  | <input type="checkbox"/> Did nothing specifically because of the fire          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collected valuables to take to safety if I had to leave                  |  |

**Questions about fire in your area**

**48. Which of the recent fires affected your area?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Hall Road Fire, Wingecarribee | <input type="radio"/> Rutleys Road Fire, Wyong        |
| <input type="radio"/> Links View Fire, Springwood   | <input type="radio"/> Hank Street Fire, Port Stephens |
| <input type="radio"/> State Mine Fire, Lithgow      | <input type="radio"/> Browns Road, Salt Ash           |
| <input type="radio"/> Mt York Rd Fire, Mt Victoria  |   |

Other (please specify)

### 49. How close did the fire get to your property?

- Damaged or destroyed the house
- Reached the house
- Burnt within the grounds but not to the house
- Stopped at the boundary
- Burnt nearby

Other (please specify)

## Questions about fire in your area

### 50. Approximately how close to your property did the fire get?

Distance (metres)

## Questions about the day of the fire

### 51. When you found out about fires in the area, how concerned were you about the risk?

	Not concerned at all	Slightly concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned
To your house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To yourself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To your family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 52. What were your major concerns for the fire?

- Protecting self/family
- Protecting pets
- Loss of property or home
- Loss of stock
- Knew road would be cut off
- Knew road would be blocked by traffic
- Did not have home prepared
- Had to care for frail/elderly in our home
- Had to care for frail/elderly in their home
- Had to care for frail/elderly living out of home
- Had children in their care
- Asthmatic in household
- Had children at a place potentially threatened by fire
- Children at home alone

Other (please specify)

## Questions about the day of the fire

**53. How long after you first learnt of the fire did it threaten your home or the area close to your home?**

- less than 15 minutes
- 15 to 30 minutes
- 30 to 60 minutes
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 to 6 hours
- 6 to 12 hours
- 12 to 24 hours
- More than 24 hours

**54. How did you first find out about the fire?**

- Smelt smoke
- Twitter
- RFS Fires Near Me app
- Warned by police/SES/firefighters
- Saw flames
- Received official warning via radio
- Received official warning via TV
- Official warning via email, SMS or home phone
- Heard Siren
- RFS brigades radio
- Facebook
- Contact from friends/neighbours/family
- Saw smoke
- Received official warning via web

**55. Were you at home at the time?**

- Yes
- No

**56. Did you try and get home?**

- Yes
- No

**57. How long did it take you to get home? Enter 9999 if you were unable to get home**

Time (Minutes)

**Questions about the day of the fire**

**58. On the day of the fire, how many people in each of the following categories were at the property (if nobody was home please insert 0):**

Adults (>65 years)

Adults (19-65 years)

Teenagers (13-18 years)

Children (6 to 12 years)

Children (2 to 6 years)

Children (< 2 years)

**59. On the day of the fire how many members of the household would be considered (only select one category per person)**

Incapacitated, i.e. injured or unwell	<input type="text"/>
Disabled	<input type="text"/>
Frail	<input type="text"/>
Elderly	<input type="text"/>

**60. Once you found out about the fire, what did you decide you would do?**

- All household members stay and some or all to defend the house/property
- Some household members leave early, others stay and defend the house/property
- Wait and see how bad it is then decide
- Whole household leaves early
- Wait for advice from emergency services
- Collect children from school/day care and return home
- Collect children from school/day care and go elsewhere
- Stay away
- No concrete plan of what to do

Other (please specify)



## 61. What information did you use to make that decision?

- Website not RFS or Bureau of Meteorology
- Social media, not RFS
- Phone call from friends
- Common sense
- Television
- In person information from neighbours or friends
- RFS social media
- Newspaper
- In person information from local RFS
- Radio
- Total Fire Ban
- RFS website
- Gut instinct
- In person direction from police or emergency services
- Bureau of Meteorology
- Fire danger rating sign
- None of the above

Other (please specify)

## Questions about the day of the fire

### 62. What did you do on the day of the fire?

- Not at home by chance
- Not at home due to predicted fire danger rating
- Left well before the fire arrived
- Left just before the fire impacted
- Attempted to protect home/property but was unsuccessful
- Attempted to protect home/property and was successful
- Waited to see what happened and had to take last-resort shelter
- At home and NOT impacted

### 63. What were the main reasons for your actions?

- Protecting my life
- Protecting the lives of my family
- Protecting pets
- Protecting home/property
- Protecting livestock
- Knew road would be cut-off
- Knew road would be blocked by traffic
- Did not have my home prepared
- Had to care for frail/elderly in my home
- Had to care for frail/elderly away from my home
- Had other peoples children
- Asthmatic in the household
- In person direction from police or emergency services

## Questions about leaving

### 64. Were you at any stage advised to leave your property due to the fires?

- Yes  No

### 65. Did any of the members of the household leave due to the fires?

- All  Some  None

## 66. What were the triggers for you to leave?

- Home caught fire
- Evacuated or removed from my property by police/emergency services
- Received an Emergency Alert telephone warning
- Heard/saw helicopters/aircraft
- Could see flames in the distance
- Recommendation to relocate suggested by police/emergency services
- We had done all we could
- Advice from friends/family members
- Could see/smell smoke
- Could see flames close by
- An official emergency warning about fire, other than Emergency Alert
- Advice from neighbours

Other (please specify)

## 67. How did you leave?

- Walked
- Family car(s)
- Neighbours' or friends' car(s)
- Transported by emergency services
- Lift provided by strangers

Other (please specify)

## 68. Was travel along the route hazardous?

- No
- Yes - Poor visibility due to smoke
- Yes - Close to the fire
- Yes - Fallen trees, branches or powerlines
- Yes - More dangerous than staying at home

## Questions about leaving

### 69. How long were you away from your home?

- A few hours
- Overnight
- 1-2 days
- For more than two days but less than a week
- More than a week

### 70. Where did you first go to?

- Family, friends or neighbours house
- Community place (eg shopping centre) well away from bushland
- Evacuation centre
- Neighbourhood Safer Place (RFS designated)

Other (please specify)

### 71. Looking back, what best describes your feelings about leaving during the fires?

- It was unnecessary and if there's a next time I won't
- It was unnecessary but if there's a next time I would do it again
- It was the right thing to do
- It was necessary but if there's a next time I won't do it because it was so inconvenient
- It was necessary (although inconvenient) and if there's a next time I would do it again
- Not a problem and I'd do it again

## Questions about staying

### 72. Did any members of the household stay during the fire?

- Yes (all members)
- Yes (some members)
- No

## Questions about staying

### 73. Why did you stay?

- Decided it was safe
- Left it too late and could not leave
- I had no transport to leave

Other (please specify)

## Questions about staying

## 74. Did some or all of those that stayed actively try to protect the house/property?

Yes

No

## 75. How long did you/they actively try to protect the property?

Time (hours)

## 76. What did you/they do to protect the property from the fire?

- None
- Preventative wetting down objects
- Extinguish spot fires in vegetation around the home
- Extinguish embers igniting on the house
- Extinguish embers igniting on outbuildings
- Protecting the house from direct flame contact or radiant heat
- Putting out fire on the house arising from direct flame contact or radiant heat

Other (please specify)

## 77. What equipment did you/they use/wear?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dust mask or cloth over mouth & nose                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting water pump           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves   | <input type="checkbox"/> Goggles                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garden tools (such as rakes and shovels)                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Water from pool, spa, dam or tank |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ladders  | <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting hose/nozzles         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tractor (slashing or ploughing to clear ground)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Mops and buckets                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Long sleeved shirt and pants (cotton)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden hose                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helmet   | <input type="checkbox"/> Boots                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile water supply (e.g. tank trailer or tank on a ute) | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden sprinkler                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bushfire sprinkler system                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Wool blanket                      |

## Questions about sheltering

## 78. Did any members of the household seek shelter in the house or other place on the property?

Yes

No

### 79. Where did you/they shelter?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A bathroom         | <input type="checkbox"/> Garage            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A bedroom          | <input type="checkbox"/> A bushfire bunker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen            | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry            | <input type="checkbox"/> Open area         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study              | <input type="checkbox"/> Pool              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living room        | <input type="checkbox"/> Water tank        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Basement or cellar |  |

Other (please specify)

### 80. Did you receive any help in protecting the property?

- No
- Family or friends (not from the household) deliberately came to help
- Firefighters or other emergency services assisted
- Community Fire Unit assisted
- Strangers assisted

Other (please specify)

### 81. During the fire did you lose any essential services?

	No	Yes	Unknown
Electricity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone (landline)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone (mobile)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Questions about damage

Here we wish to ask if there was any damage or loss to your property or animals as a result of the recent fire

### 82. Was there any damage to your house, property or pets?

- Yes
- No

### 83. Was the home damaged or destroyed by the fire?

- House survived, no damage
- House survived, minor damage
- House survived but major damage
- House destroyed

### 84. Was there any damage to the following?

	No damage	Damage	Destroyed	Not applicable
Vehicle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Caravan/Motorhome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water Tank	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pipes or hoses for firefighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Garage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Granny flat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other outbuildings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hothouse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 85. How many of your pets or livestock did the bush fires injure or kill?

Pets (injured)	<input type="text"/>
Pets (killed)	<input type="text"/>
Poultry (injured)	<input type="text"/>
Poultry (destroyed)	<input type="text"/>
Livestock (injured)	<input type="text"/>
Livestock (destroyed)	<input type="text"/>

## Questions about messaging

Finally, we would like to ask you about messaging before, during and after the fires. This is to help improve our messaging for future events.

### 86. How would you describe the official RFS warnings, e.g. text messages, information on websites or on radio, etc?

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	N/A
Sufficient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Too soon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alarmist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficiently localised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Telephone messaging

**87. Did you receive any official warnings on telephone, such as recorded messages from the RFS, as to what action to take with respect to fires in the area?**

Yes

No

## Telephone messaging

**88. Were the warnings in the telephone message:**

	Agree	Disagree
Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Right Frequency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficiently local	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## SMS messaging

**89. Did you receive any advice via SMS (text message) as to what action to take with respect to fires in the area?**

Yes

No

## SMS messaging

**90. Were the warnings on SMS:**

	Agree	Disagree
Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Right Frequency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficiently local	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Radio messaging

**91. Did you hear any advice on the radio as to what action to take with respect to fires in the area?**

Yes

No

**92. Were the warnings and advice on the radio:**

	Agree	Disagree
Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Right Frequency	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficiently local	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>





### 100. Throughout the fires, which was the most reliable source of INFORMATION

- Facebook
- Twitter
- RFS Website
- Local Radio
- National Radio
- Television
- Family or Friends
- Local RFS volunteers

Other (please specify)

### Questions about messaging

#### 101. For future events, what are your preferred methods for receiving warnings?

	Radio	TV	Recorded message by phone	Text message	Twitter	Facebook
First preference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Second preference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

### Community meetings

#### 102. Did you attend any of the community meetings held in association with the recent fires?

- Yes
- No
- None in my area
- Found out too late

### Community meetings

#### 103. How did you find out about the community meetings?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- RFS Website
- Radio
- Television
- Word of mouth

Other (please specify)

**104. At the meeting:**

	Yes	No
Was the information useful?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did you have difficulty seeing or hearing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was the location difficult to reach?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Did the information help you decide what to do?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**NSW RFS media briefings**

**105. Did you watch/listen to any of the live television updates from the NSW RFS throughout the October fires?**

- Yes  No



**NSW RFS media briefings**

**106. What did you use to access the briefings?**

- Television
- Radio
- Internet stream

Other (please specify)

**107. How would you describe the briefings?**

	Yes	No
Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sufficient local information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accurate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Finished!**

**108. Thank you for your time in completing the survey. Do you have any further comments?**



## APPENDIX C

### Free-text "Other" responses

## Appendix C - Free-text "Other" responses

### Question 30. What have you done or intended to do to prepare the property from bush fire?"

- *Evacuation route is essentially one road out of village so planning not that relevant 2 - "Go Kit" had been in place previous summers but not in place on this occasion 3 - Full plan not practices but equipment was tested periodically 4 - Decision to evacuate would be made at time depending on who was home, weather conditions, volume of water in tanks, etc.*
- *Actually, I have a physical disability, so all I can do is keep the grass down and gutters clear (getting someone else to do it), and clear out if there is a fire. No way could I fight one.*
- *Affordability is also an issue for which no option was provided*
- *Also organised with elderly neighbour her evacuation plan.*
- *Am a Fourth Gen fire along with 2 brothers and father*
- *and had TV on ABC News 24 emergency broadcast updated on bushfire progress on RFS website ; had radio tuned to ABC*
- *At start of fire season 01/10/2013 has serviced fire pump, checked and repaired suction hose and other hoses. Also, cleaned gutters and removed any material / furniture from near house or on verandah. Basically, before the fire season, got ready and made sure all equipment worked, and that I knew where hoses, rakes, gloves, boots were.*
- *Because of extreme fire risk area...would leave before the threat of fire was too great to leave...exit route would be through flames if fire was in adjacent bushland. Would not stay to defend.*
- *Both of us are active RFS members*
- *Breath don't panic relax follow the plan act an act decisively.*
- *Built house to BAL40 standard. Check FDI each night in warmer months.*
- *calm and prepare !!!! evacuating a poorly maintained property, as newer residence were advised by phone to EVACUATE NOW these past fire season was ridiculous. We will all come home to desolation afterwards ...fires have enough to do without having the responsible help of property owner. telling people to evacuate*
- *Constantly monitored Rural Fire Service and NSWFB websites.*
- *Did not allow for not having ANY water or fire brigade available*
- *don't have a local CFU*
- *Evacuation plan for horses, dogs, etc*
- *Financial and personal physical limitations restrict. I connect with the only 2 neighbours in my street for mutual support during fire threat and preparation. An informal but firm arrangement. Prepare and maintain property then evacuate if necessary.*
- *FIRE ALL TO QUICK TO GET THE GO TO KIT. NO FIRE BRIGADE IN ATTENDANCE FOR ATLEAST HOUR AND HALF AFTER HOUSE BURNT DOWN. NO ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IF WAS A FIRE RISK DAY IN THE MORNING BEFORE LEAVING THE HOUSE*
- *Fire pump , hoses and 4000 ltrs of water*
- *Fire pump and hoses*
- *Ground slopes so difficult to install tanks etc. bush land surrounding us does not belong to us and is conservation protected, so clearing OUR space is irrelevant as we are exposed elsewhere.*
- *Had a 'fire folder' with all important docs in it incl insurance etc. and photos backup onto a separate hard drive.*
- *Had set triggers for when different parts of our plan were actioned. Fire pumps and hoses. Training. seasonally servicing and running pumps and generator.*
- *Have campaigned to get rid of the RFS structure and empower local fire captains to burn off. The RFS point blank refuse to burn off. WE HAD NO BUSHFIRE PROBLEMS once. The RFS IS the problem.*
- *Have closely monitored fire situation and interacted with fire emergency officers and local community*

- *here lies the problem-we are up the end of pheasants nest road and have to get through 3 heavily bushed gullies to get out THIS IS OUR ONLY ACCESS ROUTE!!!! WE DESPERATELY NEED A ROUTE OUT ONTO THE M5 IN AN EMERGENCY WHICH IS ALL OF TWO MINUTES FROM HERE. At the moment it is a 10 minute drive through the gullies etc just to get to arina road.we will all die in here if the fires get this far.we all have animals here and us alone would need 3 trips to get ours out*
- *Husband has joined rfs*
- *I am really disappointed to the response from the RFS. Steve Earlam has been obstructive to me preparing for bushfires. I am "not allowed to do burn offs under any circumstances". The RFS truckk ran away last fire. They were photographed doing a "rooster tail" down my driveway in the last fire at my property. I do not feel supported by the RFS.*
- *I evacuated my children to Sydney for the duration of the fire threat to our town, and stayed to protect my home, spot fires, embers, hosing the gardens etc... I had my bags packed and the animals ready to go when/ if we needed to evac as well.*
- *I have 2 fire pumps 1 petrol and a new desiel pump currently integrating with alarm system so I can start it remotly by phone to turn on sprinklers, also connecting to thermal dector to start automatically as well. have a 30,000ltr water tank.*
- *I have installed drop down gutters and Rainwater heads with mesh so no leaf build up re brackets for drop down gutters - they are called Mak brackets - would definitely recommend for all houses - you don't need a ladder to clean - anybody can operate*
- *I worked until January with RFS Blue Mountains District Office there for I would be at work when evacuation orders would be given. My Husband works in Parramatta and would be at work.*
- *If I had to evacuate horse float in front yard so it can be hooked onto car quick then get out. I keep all my photos on disks in a bag because photos can not be replaced, material possession can be replaced.*
- *It happened too quickly, there was no warning. We literally had a bushfire in the backyard, all the planning in the world is useless when it happens so quickly. Previously we had days to prepare, knowing a fire was in the Gross Valley and may impact us. This time we saw flame before we knew it was nearby!*
- *Joined the brigade and trained as operational fire fighter*
- *Made own sprinkler system for roof. Had full spa pool available for extra water and filled bath tub and sinks*
- *Mobile phone messages to family members plan in place in case of emergency.*
- *Monitored RFS and BOM web sites continually during threat period. Had petrol pump primed and water tank full. Had run out the hose ready for use, as well as 2 garden hoses. Had buckets of water and piles of rags in yard to defend spotting; had blankets and towels and basins of water to defend house against smoke and ember incursion. Protective clothing ready: boiler suit, wool socks, cotton shirt, leather gloves., goggles, respirator, hard hat with leather shoulder protection, leather boots. Essential items in box ready for evacuation. Evacuation shelter prepared (storage unit in shopping centre) with water, chairs, makeshift toilet, torches, radio & batteries, emergency food.*
- *moved valauables to relatives out of area*
- *no mobile access so unable to download apps*
- *No mobile coverage in colo the battery radio is essential*
- *no money to do most things listed yet, dont know what to put in go kit, we are on tank water only, evacuation to bargo was unsatisfactorally advised, wernt told where to go.*
- *not applicable due to position within industrial area, a dwelling fire has been prepared for*
- *One of the most important survival tools was knowing exactly what was happening with the fires when it was happening. Media (TV, Radio etc) was far too delayed in advising residents of details. I found Face Book VERY helpful with neighbours and friends (and their friends) from the community constantly posting updates about what they were observing. "I can see flames from my back window - it's moving very fast - heading south towards Springwood" - pass on the warning" - 10minutes later - Have now evacuated to Springwood Sports Club - all safe. "I can see smoke coming from behind Coles - huge fire - could be back burn out of control - smoke very heavy" "Hawkesbury Rd - just set up road block - both directions block - avoid travel if at all possible - traffic is at a standstill - no one being allowed through" "St Columbas in lockdown - kids are all safe in hall - emergency services now in attendance" "Anyone needing somewhere to house dogs/cats I can help (phone number)." This kind of message was not only helpful in keeping us up to date on the progress of the fire almost immediately but also provided assistance and advice when a request was posted for who to contact for official information and specialised assistance. TV and radio tended to be at least 15 minutes behind the events - ABC radio was the best of them and they were 5 minutes behind. The speed with which the fires moved through Winmalee meant every second was vital and made decision making much easier and more effective. Strongly suggest FB recommended as a source of information and FB pages dedicated to instant updates. It also helped for those who were at work or away from home at the time of the fires - as many did not receive their emergency alert on phones with no way of having the situation corrected in time. Regular updating of current phone number for SMS and automatic alerts should be part of the fire preparation. Would also be good to have a web site dedicated to allowing those in fire affected areas to advise of their*

safety status. Would help fireies to know who was still in houses and who had evacuated and where they could be contacted if necessary. While it's lovely to know people care about you and want to know you're safe it does take up vital phone reserves (I understand the mobile network was in overload) and means you race to answer the phone thinking it might be an emergency alert update when you could be out there preparing to protect your property. This way caring friends and relatives can check on this web site to know you're safe. The emergency services were fabulous - can't say enough good things about them! Thanks

- Only recently found out there was a Bush Fire Survival plan kit from RFS,
- Only water supply are our rain water tanks a total of 145,000 Litres Not likely to leave the property we have access to eaten down clear grass land ares
- Our house already burnt down in June. This was the rental house while the usual house was rebuilt. So we were pretty paranoid about fire.
- Our property was considered safe by the members of the fire brigade & RFS who attended our property - plenty of hoses ready for use, generator, additional water supply, cleared gutters, sprinkler system, short grass, no rubbish, no overhanging trees, etc.
- Plan has always involved get animals out safely. House is 2nd in mind.
- putting in water tanks, pumps etc
- Raked and pile burn where possible, removed undergrowth up to 50 metres from house.
- Removed valuables from the house
- Some options 'not considered' are actually result of insufficient funds to activate
- Spoke with RFS regarding local hydrants (one too full of dirt to use, and the other is a cover with NO HYDRANT IN IT!)
- The "Go" Kit was partially packed the remaining items planned in mind to grab at last minute (clothes, cats into their boxes etc).
- The fire nears me app is not available on Windows Phones
- The neighbourhood is small. We help each other without forming a Community Fire Unit. Old people are checked and information is shared.
- There is no safe evacuatin route out. We either leave early or stay and defend. Promoting safe places last minute information all implies evacuation at the last minute is possible. This is a dangerous and contradictory message
- Use Victorian CFA fire risk plans
- using 12 years rfs experience
- Watch weather and FDI
- we are just leaving early
- we are on tank water a supply other than mains is impossible, as our tanks are our only source of water, we are power dependant too in that respect, it is another source of power such as a generator or other pump that is required in our area
- We are unable to have a second water supply as we are on tank water, intending to purchase a petrol generator to use pump for water.
- We have a fire proof, waterproof locked box which we put all our important papers in eg mortgage, insurance, passports, computer back up etc about October every year in case there is a fire and we aren't there
- We have a petrol powered water pump (two 1" hoses) fed from the pool.
- We set up our reptiles in portable cages it would of taken 5 min to evacuate, a job that could take an hour or more
- Were not allowed access back to the property to save livestock and horse float which were burnt. attempts to have hazard reduction zone between my property and the neglected adjoining property have been meet negatively both by the Hunter Water Corporation (owner) and the Rural Fire Service, making intrusive fi.re damage impossible to contain
- Wheelchair user so unable to clean gutters etc and renting so this is the landlords responsibility and has not been done for 12months or more.
- When we were given the possibility to watch for ash from state mine fire and the springwood fires entering grose vally we removed our special things to my mums the pets cat and dog came with us in car for all trips out and if fire was near we would have let chooks and rooster out. We made sure that everyone had a working mobile and yard was ready by clearing and setting up a fire pump near swimming pool if we had embers but we had basically decided to leave as insurance was up to date and lives more important
- WILL LEAVE A COMMENT



## Question 34. What made you decide you should make a plan?

- *12 years rfs service*
- *20 years RFS*
- *2nd nature due to job*
- *50 years experience as a volunteer firefighter and employment in the rural areas of western NSW*
- *a documentary about bushfires on TV, a few years before the Black Saturday fires*
- *Activities as RFS members*
- *Advice from previous owner of property about likely fire behaviour.*
- *advice from RFS at Brigade training*
- *Advice from the Victorian CFA*
- *Advice of Twitter and Facebook by other user (ie not the RFS)*
- *As a child I grew up with having one a plan ready*
- *As a member of the RFS - always knew importance of a plan*
- *As a member of the RFS, I took it very seriously*
- *Attended Winmalee High School many years ago - regular RFS visits, etc...*
- *Basic consideration when moving to the area*
- *been a member of local brigade*
- *Being a member of community engagement team*
- *Being an RFS member X2*
- *Being caught up in a fire*
- *Common Sence after 35 years RFS*
- *common sense X 6*
- *Common sense in a high fire area*
- *COMMON SENSE PASSED DOWN THRU GENERATIONS*
- *Community engagement taught me as much as I teach them*
- *Doing com ed in the community*
- *due to small children and tank water supply we feltthis was our best plan*
- *experience*
- *Experience from being a member of RFS*
- *Experience of bushfire*
- *Family at same address for 90 years. Continued our own successfull defence and plans for this time*
- *Fire awareness*
- *formed based on xmas 2001 experience*
- *From professional and volunteer fire fighting experience*
- *grew up in area.... always had one*
- *Half household are members of NSW RFS*
- *Have lived in bushfire areas my whole life.*
- *have lived in the mountains for 25 years and been through 4 fires, you just know what to do*
- *I'm an RFS member and not a hypocryt*
- *I am a fire fighter, I am out fighting the fires*
- *I am employed as a Bushfire Officer*
- *i have done bush fore Awareness course*
- *what is going on then respond as required in relation to the fire event to save as much of our property as possible on the day.*
- *im community safety officer for zone*
- *Lifetime Blue Mountains resident*
- *Living here for 35 years and keeping an eye on the weather. Bush hanot been burnt out for many years.*

- LOCAL KNOWLEDGE
- location to township
- Lung problems in the older members. A brass musician who would lose his career if he wrecked his lungs.
- many decades of living thru bushfires
- Member of the NSW RFS
- My husband has motor Neurone disease so we need to be organised
- Need to update regularly depending on changing conditions and family members state of health
- opposite to rfs media. e=real fire experience
- Own experince and knowledge
- Parents grew up here. Its part of our life
- past experience
- Personal assessment of very dangerous conditions in September 2013
- Personal experience
- Practice what we preach
- Previous bushfire in Hawkesbury Heights in September 2013
- previous experience
- Previous experience (Boxing Day 2001 - Warrimoo)
- Previous experience with fires in the local area, so pre-existing fire plan in place
- Raised here. Part of growing up we have all experienced fires.
- RFS member
- RFS volunteer training
- rfs/frnsw members
- sensible thing to do!
- Son is with NSWFB
- Survival
- The catastrophic fuel buildup and the RFS REFUSAL TO BURN IT OFF!!!!!!
- the fires of 2002
- Through discussion
- training
- We are both volunteers, it is automatic response
- We are in an exposed postion (BAL Flame Zone) and Black Saturday raised the bar; a plan is now essential for us. We still have our emergency box ready, fire pump and hose ready, protective clothing ready, emergency refuge ready and will keep everything that way until the fire season is over.
- We live in a high risk area.
- We live in and are aware of risk
- With my experiance i have a very good idea
- Workplace Experience
- Years of living in the mountains - 68, 77, 94, 2001 fires

## Question 36. What were your main concerns in developing a plan?

- *"100 year old house, potentially vulnerable..."*
- *"access out can be hard live in dead end street, rather be safe than sorry"*
- *"As RFS members most if not all would not be at home"*
- *"Caring for adult sons with disabilities"*
- *"Child with lung condition"*
- *"disability leaves me with no other real choice, and this is not in your list"*
- *"disabled - wheelchair user with no vehicle"*
- *"Disabled adult who has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and child with severe asthma"*
- *"Had to consider friend (32) incomplete quadriplegic living on other side of town"*
- *"health of residents"*
- *"high risk area"*
- *"Home is old, needs maintenance and not easily defended."*
- *"House deemed unsavable in event of fire by SES"*
- *"House has history of 'no town water pressure' during fire emergencies."*
- *"House was prepared so I could defend as needed and move on to help others as threat passed."*
- *"Houses and property are replaceable, lives are not replaceable"*
- *"I could be at work in Sydney when fire broke out (which, in the event, I was and was cut off from my home and cats)"*
- *"Insufficient financial resources to establish effective defence."*
- *"Knew from experience roads can be cut off and utilities can be restricted or fail; Cannot always guarantee that fire fighting personnel and appliances are able to attend especially in catastrophic scenario."*
- *"knew there would be loss of power"*
- *"Knew we wouldn't be home as we will be on a fire truck somewhere"*
- *"lack of support from RFS over the years. Getting older."*
- *"Make sure that we would be ready on time and not wait for maybe somebody telling us to leave, which might not happen."*
- *"MY PLAN IS TO GET RID OF THE RFS \\"NO BURN\\" white shirt wankers."*
- *"not much point hanging around firefighters will do what they can"*
- *"One adult disabled - multiple sclerosis. One adult pregnant."*
- *"one road in and out only"*
- *"our bush ALWAYS burns, the severity solely depends on the conditions"*
- *"Please note, the plan was variable depending on weather conditions, who was home, etc. - this was a deliberate decision not a failure to plan"*
- *"Possible traffic congestion"*
- *"Question 31 ignores the Catastrophic rating which is all leave. There are not enough options in this question"*
- *"sick neighbour, sent them away and looked after both houses"*
- *"Small street in bushland very likely to be inaccessible to emergency crews in a fire"*
- *"Survival"*
- *"the likely behaviour of the NSW RFS"*
- *"We have always looked after our property and family and neighbours and will continue to do so"*
- *"we have only one road in and out"*
- *"we were all fairly traumatised already from house burning down in June - we didn't want to get a reputation as the people whose houses kept burning down. Also didn't want kids more traumatised than necessary."*
- *"Weather forecast"*
- *"What to do it on my own with kids. Directions fire might come from in which risk was greatest."*

## Question 38. What information did you use to prepare your plan?

- *"20 years RFS experience"*
- *"A respected elder who had lived in the area for 40 years"*
- *"advice from local RFS"*
- *"Also my years of experience"*
- *"And all of the above"*
- *"Assistance from neighbors who had lived in area for a long time."*
- *"Bush vire CRC research"*
- *"Bushfire Survival app and Community Engagement material from RFS"*
- *"community safety officer"*
- *"decades on knowledge"*
- *"Experience (member of Bush Fire Brigade (1987-1994), I have prepared Bushfire Hazard Assessments"*
- *"Experience and professional knowledge"*
- *"Facebook"*
- *"Fire experience"*
- *"Google maps"*
- *"have been a NSW RFS member"*
- *"have not used plan"*
- *"Husbands experience of growing up in a rural area that had had bushfires"*
- *"I have discussed options with many people including members of RFS"*
- *"I've told you stupid!! THE FUCK WIT RFS CAREERISTS who won't burn off!!!"*
- *"Information from Twitter and Facebook (ie not RFS)"*
- *"Internet"*
- *"Internet research perusal of books and observations of other properties"*
- *"knowledge from job"*
- *"learn from family and schools and friends"*
- *"My knowledge with the RFS"*
- *"my plan was developed in 1990 in response to a fire."*
- *"Neighbours knowledge of area."*
- *"Own experience and knowledge 34 years as a Volunteer"*
- *"Past Experience"*
- *"Personal experience"*
- *"Personal knowledge and experiences"*
- *"personal knowledge/ experience from rfs/ frnsw training/ experience of previous fires"*
- *"previous experiences"*
- *"Previous fire experience"*
- *"Prior experience"*
- *"Reading (eg. Joan Webster), verbal info from fires,"*
- *"Report of the 2009 Black Saturday Victorian bushfires"*
- *"RFS Horse booklet"*
- *"rfs service experience"*
- *"RFS site assessment from local unit"*
- *"RFS training"*
- *"rfs training , experience of wildfire, logical progressions of action"*
- *"Talking to local RFS"*
- *"Training and experience with NSW and WA Forestry,"*
- *"used info from me im a firefighter"*

- *"Used my knowledge of 22 years in the RFS to prepare the house and my neighbours"*
- *"Victorian CFA"*
- *"Victorian CFA documents"*
- *"We are all long time RFS members"*
- *"Winmalee RFS on Twitter/Facebook"*
- *"Workplace Experience"*
- *"Years of professional training"*

## Question 44. "Where is it?" (the neighbourhood safer place)

- *"1km down the road"*
- *"800m from my home, the RFS shed"*
- *"Adjacent to Megalong Valley Tea Rooms Peach Tree road Megalong Valley. Depending upon circumstances it is highly likely we would be unable to get there and in fact we would be safer staying put in our local property area."*
- *"adjacent to Penrose RFB Building, Kareela Road, Penrose,"*
- *"ANY CLEAR AREA CLOSE TO THE PLACE I RESIDE IE SPORTS GROUND, OPEN FIELD, A PUBLIC TOILET BLOCK, A POOL, A DAM, A RIVER ETC"*
- *"Appin shops/ football oval"*
- *"At the fire station"*
- *"AT THIS TIME SPRINGWOOD SPORTS CLUB, PREVIOUSLY SPRINGWOOD GOLF CLUB ALSO WINMALEE SHOPPING CENTRE THIS TIME"*
- *"Bargo Hotel"*
- *"Bargo oval" X4*
- *"Bargo Oval is an assembly place but we had already decided that it was not necessarily safe because it is close to bush and a fire affecting Yanderra could also impact on Bargo"*
- *"Bargo Pub and local shops"*
- *"bargo shops and bargo pub"*
- *"Bargo sports ground" X4*
- *"Beside Hill Top fire station"*
- *"blackheath community centre"*
- *"Blackheath Oval"*
- *"Blaxland high"*
- *"Blaxland Uniting Church"*
- *"Blue Mountain CC Chambers"*
- *"Blue Mountains City Church, Rusden Road Mount Riverview"*
- *"Bowral main street/CBD"*
- *"Boyd Oval"*
- *"Bradman Oval, Blackheath"*
- *"Bunnings carpark in Mittagong and the Mittagong Golf Club"*
- *"Bunnings mittagong"*
- *"Caravan & camp ground"*
- *"Church at Hazelbrook shopping centre"*
- *"Clissold Reserve"*
- *"Clissold reserve emu heights"*
- *"Coles, Winmalee" X2*
- *"colo vale hall. i think jurd park would be better"*
- *"Community Centre" X2*
- *"Community Centre, Colarado Drive Blue Haven"*
- *"community club springwood"*
- *"Community hall" X2*
- *"Council Car Park"*
- *"Dutchies nursery"*
- *"Edward Bennett Oval"*
- *"ellerman park dural"*
- *"Faulconbridge Primary School" X10*
- *"Faulconbridge Public School - Great Western Hwy/ Grose Rd or if worse Springwood Bowling Club Macquarie Rd - also evacuation centre"*

- *"Ferodale oval"*
- *"Finan Park which was blocked as the fire came from that way."*
- *"Fire Control Centre"*
- *"Fire Shed West Pde Hill Top"*
- *"firestation house up the road has concrete bunker"*
- *"Gillespie Field. This is impractical, as traffic will block Fox Valley Road/Highway preventing access. We have identified Warrawee Bowling Club as our nearest 'safe' destination."*
- *"Glenbrook Oval"*
- *"Glenbrook Park"*
- *"gloucester park"*
- *"Golf club blackhearg"*
- *"Golf Course"*
- *"hall"*
- *"Headland Park, Austinmer"*
- *"Hill Top Fire Station"*
- *"Hotel"*
- *"I forget what the oval is called but I know how to get there."*
- *"I think local uniting church"*
- *"In a public park full of she-oaks, with limited space and car parking"*
- *"Kareela Rd, near Penrose Fire Station"*
- *"Katoomba Public School Grounds. Waratah St. Katoomba."*
- *"Katoomba Showground or coles"*
- *"Kindle bark oval - but is not really suitable. Next closest one is more sporting fields in locality."*
- *"Kurri bowling club"*
- *"Lawson - Mid Mountains Neighbour Centre"*
- *"Lawson Community Centre"*
- *"Leura golf course"*
- *"Leura Public School Woolworths Katoomba Coles/Old Kmart"*
- *"Lioness Park, Gwandalan"*
- *"local community hall"*
- *"Local Fire Station"*
- *"Local high school"*
- *"Local hotel"*
- *"local oval" X2*
- *"local public school"*
- *"Local school" X2*
- *"local school and/or sports oval"*
- *"Local shops" X2*
- *"local show grounds"*
- *"local sporting fields"*
- *"Main street in Appin"*
- *"Mallabulla sporting fields or tanilba bay/lemon tree passage water front"*
- *"Megalong tea house carpark"*
- *"Melrose park"*
- *"Melrose Park"*
- *"Melrose park,k\Katoomba public school, BMCC chambers, if it wasn't a building site at the moment Pioneer place"*
- *"Mid-mountains Community Centre, Lawson"*
- *"mittagong RSL"*

- *"Mount Hunter Public School. Although its suitability is dubious."*
- *"Mt Hunter community hall next to the fire station at Mt hunter"*
- *"Mt Riverview shops" X2*
- *"Mt Riverview shops, Rusden Rd."*
- *"Mt Victoria Hotel"*
- *"Mt Victoria local Pub"*
- *"Near the Community Centre in Nepean Park, Yarramundi."*
- *"Neighbour's residence 700 metres from my place."*
- *"Neighbour 2 Ks away from my land"*
- *"next to the fire station, at the bottom of my street"*
- *"Next to the local RFS fire shed in Hill Top NSW 2575"*
- *"Noiseworks family centre old bathurst rd"*
- *"oakdale community hall next to fire station"*
- *"our local shops at Mt Riverview"*
- *"Oval and the Pub"*
- *"Oval in Mulbring"*
- *"Oval near bargo hotel"*
- *"Pamela st next to the stairs and walkway"*
- *"Park"*
- *"park in londonderry at the community centre"*
- *"Pauls Corner, Intersection Nelson Bay Road and Richardson Road"*
- *"pub but unknown to them rfs stuff up"*
- *"public school"*
- *"railway station"*
- *"Raymond terrace - Medowie shops"*
- *"RfS and bunnings"*
- *"Richmond"*
- *"Richmond club"*
- *"school"*
- *"Showground & Community Center"*
- *"Sports club"*
- *"Sports Oval, Primary School Oval, RFS Station"*
- *"Springwood Bowling Club" X3*
- *"Springwood Country Club" X3*
- *"Springwood Country Club/Golf Course Winmalee Shopping Centre"*
- *"Springwood Gold Club and Springwood Bowling Club"*
- *"Springwood Golf Club" X5*
- *"Springwood Golf Club - although wouldn't have been able to get there and neighbours said Winmalee Shopping Mall was closest. Believe Winmalee High might be such a place in future. (Gazette article prior to file had only mentioned Glenbrook Oval !!!)"*
- *"Springwood golf club Springwood bowling club"*
- *"Springwood Golf Club and Springwood Sports Club"*
- *"Springwood golf club. In the recent fires it was Springwood sports club."*
- *"Springwood High School"*
- *"Springwood Public School"*
- *"Springwood Sports Club" X8*
- *"Springwood sports club Springwood country club"*
- *"Springwood sports club or winmalee public"*
- *"Springwood Sports Club, Macquarie Rd, Springwood"*



- *"Springwood Sports Club, used to be at Springwood Golf Club, but as last fire started very near Golf club, that would not be the place to go."*
- *"St mArys towers or Douglas park oval"*
- *"Summerhayes park"*
- *"Tahmoor"*
- *"Tahmoor, Buxton"*
- *"Taylor park"*
- *"Tennis court area on estate and in bad scenario, Picton Mall area."*
- *"The Imperial Hotel - BUT THE RFS AND THE COUNCIL CHANGED THEIR MINDS the day after the bushfire hit Mt Victoria - the RFS Community Liaison Officer from Katoomba RFS HQ was useless!"*
- *"the local school"*
- *"The oval adjacent to Leichhardt Street"*
- *"the oval in medowie"*
- *"the sporting complex end of darling st"*
- *"Thirlmere"*
- *"Thirlmere public school"*
- *"Thomas Park East Blaxland"*
- *"Tilligerry RSL Club"*
- *"Town CBD"*
- *"Town hall"*
- *"Uniting Church at Blaxland East and Shops car park at Mt Riverview"*
- *"Warragamba Public School Hall"*
- *"Welby Oval and the RSL Club"*
- *"Wentworth Falls Bowles Club and Pitt Park"*
- *"Wentworth Falls Bowling Club"*
- *"Wests Diggers Club I think. and/or Fingal Beach"*
- *"Whitten Park Glenbrook"*
- *"Whitton Park, Glenbrook" X2*
- *"WILLIAMTOWN HALL"*
- *"Winifred west park, Welby oval, bunnings car park"*
- *"Winmalee high school"*
- *"Winmalee shopping centre"*
- *"Winmalee Shopping Centre" X2*
- *"Winmalee Shopping centre and Springwood Sports centre"*
- *"Woodford Fire Station or Lawson Community Centre"*
- *"Woolworths/Council car park, Leura"*
- *"yanderra school"*
- *"Yerrinbool Community Hall/Fire Station" X2*
- *"Yerrinbool Hall"*
- *"Yerrinbool rural fire shed"*
- *"Yerrinbool soccer fields/ tahmoor sports fields"*
- *"zig zag railway clarence 2790"*

## Question 48. "Which of the recent fires affected your area?"

- *"& Blackheath"*
- *"A number of fires around me but not directly threatening"*
- *"Also Hank Street Fire" X2*
- *"Also state mine fire can't check both boxes"*
- *"Also, Springwood as kids go to school at Winmalee"*
- *"and Mt York Road, Hartley"*
- *"And the Hawkesbury Road fire"*
- *"bargo ans wilton and avon dam road"*
- *"Bennett Road, Londonderry, Castlereagh Road, Cranebrook, Richmond Road, Bligh Park"*
- *"Blacktown Rd, Castlereagh Rd"*
- *"Both Hank rd and Browns Rd"*
- *"Both State Mine and Mt York were threats only"*
- *"Cabbage tree rd / Bulahdelah forest" X2*
- *"chapman parade directly behind us"*
- *"chapman parade part of linksview fire"*
- *"Chapman pde and Grose rd more so"*
- *"Cullendore / Wylie Creek"*
- *"doonside road !"*
- *"Fingal Bay Port Stephens"*
- *"Fingal Bay Fire - Marine Drive"*
- *"Fire in hawesbury heights a few weeks prior to the linksview fire"*
- *"Fire which started at balmoral and went to yanderra unsure of name?"*
- *"Hawesbury Rd/ Lynchs Ck fire"*
- *"Hawkesbury Heights Fire"*
- *"Hawkesbury Road Fire Winmalee 3 weeks before Links View Fire"*
- *"Hawkesbury Road, Winmalee" X4*
- *"Heatherbrae"*
- *"Heavy smoke in area no fire"*
- *"holbrook, minjary,"*
- *"I attended fires at Springwood and Mt Victoria"*
- *"Italia rd"*
- *"Local fires"*
- *"londonderry/castlereagh"*
- *"Lower Portland"*
- *"Medowie road, Medowie" X3*
- *"Minmi"*
- *"Moombriil - Woomargama state forest 14kms away"*
- *"Mt Boyce backburn"*
- *"Mt Victoria as well"*
- *"Mt York - This could have had impact if not controlled"*
- *"nil" X2*
- *"No Direct effects but potential from Mt York & State Mine"*
- *"No physical threat, only economic."*
- *"None" X3*
- *"None - we responded to State Mine"*
- *"None but I have family and friends in the areas affected"*

- *"none but I was involved in the Hall Road fire as a rfs member"*
- *"Not in our area"*
- *"pilliga fires"*
- *"Plus Rulveys Road Fire"*
- *"Plus the one two weeks prior"*
- *"raymond terrace and medowie"*
- *"Recent - South Turramurra arson events"*
- *"Richmond Rd fire"*
- *"Springwood and State Mine fires were looking to converge near home, within week if weather continued"*
- *"teal road, ponderosa road"*
- *"The fires in the Blue Mountains region: Springwood, Mt Vic and Lithgow."*
- *"Tizzana rd fire"*
- *"Was at Redhead Point, Lake Munmorah fires as volunteer"*
- *"We could see the State Mine Fire too as the week went on"*
- *"we were between state mine blue mts and springwood watched because of ember attack in bowen mt and springwood getting into grose valley"*
- *"We were in the middle, between the Lithgow, Springwood and Mt Vic fires"*
- *"Weddin Moutains"*
- *"Windsor Downs"*
- *"winmalee, yellow rock"*
- *"Wollondilly Shire...Yanderra"*
- *"worried about Hells Hole Fire have horse friends their I was prepared to help them move stock if needed"*
- *"Yanderra"*

## Question 49. "How close did the fire get to your property?"

- "1 km"
- "1 km down street and 3 kms up street"
- "1.8 k's away"
- "10 klm away"
- "14kms away"
- "15 west of house"
- "15km"
- "1kl away"
- "1st fire 500m away 2nd fire backburnt at rear of our property"
- "2-3 kms away"
- "2 spotfires over fence"
- "2 villages away"
- "2km away"
- "30 meters"
- "30 minutes away"
- "5 Klm"
- "8-10 kms"
- "8km" X2
- "A block away"
- "a couple of kms away"
- "a fare way from my place"
- "A few kilometres away but clearly visible from our home"
- "A few km away, but potentially threatening"
- "A few limometeers away"
- "A few valleys away"
- "about 1.5k away"
- "about 15 km"
- "about 25kms away"
- "About 5 houses away"
- "about seven kilometers away"
- "Across the end of the valley our house is at the top"
- "Across the highway"
- "Across the road from us"
- "Approx 5km away" X3
- "approximately 4km away" X2
- "As the crow flies...less than 1km away."
- "back burn fire out of control"
- "Back burning at Mt Riverview"
- "back burning took place nearby"
- "Backburning done about 100m of our home"
- "Backburns on other side of town"
- "Blackheath was under threat. Live beside Grose Valley."
- "blocked access to the peninsular with no public exit because fire across the road."
- "Burnt adjoining gorge."
- "Burnt at daughters school"
- "Burnt Grounds and sheds"

- *"burnt leaves but not live embers in the backyard"*
- *"Burnt on other side of Great Western Hwy - within kilometres but not really under any threat"*
- *"burnt opposite way" "Burnt other nearby neighbourhoods including near relatives' homes and my child's school"*
- *"burnt right across the street"*
- *"burnt the gateposts, 1.5km from the house"*
- *"Burnt valley backing on to our suburb"*
- *"Bushfire 4-5 km distant. RFS backburnt on the property destroying 4-5 ha. Bushfire did not join up the backburnt area."*
- *"containment lines"*
- *"Could see smoke but still had to pass a fair way"*
- *"damaged my parents house completely but just burnt around our area"*
- *"did not affect my property"*
- *"Did not affect, only threatened"*
- *"did not breach containment lines past Medlow Bath"*
- *"did not come anywhere near"*
- *"Did not come near"*
- *"Did not cross highway"*
- *"Did not get near my home."*
- *"Didn't come within 10km but smoke drift and embers were falling in the yard."*
- *"Distant - smoke only"*
- *"ember attack on neighbouring property. Fire turned with wind change approx 200m before it reached our property."*
- *"Ember fire in back yard"*
- *"End of my riverview"*
- *"End of our street and parents home on sunny ridge rd was lost"*
- *"end of street 500 metres"*
- *"Fences damaged and damage to rear entertainment area"*
- *"Fire did not take possible predicted course so local area was not affected."*
- *"fire embers/fireball went over house and set fire to bushes, pool cover, fence around pool and melted pool cover roller"*
- *"Fire not close but smoke a hazard for ashmatic"*
- *"Fire was about 7 Kilometres away"*
- *"Fire was contained 15kms from our home"*
- *"fireground 220 metres away"*
- *"Gross Valley"*
- *"Had potential to but did not travel to our locality"*
- *"Headed down the mountain from Yellow Rock. Got a couple of hundred metres away from the edge of suburb."*
- *"Heavy smoke in the area from south and west"*
- *"High Alert only"*
- *"In local area"*
- *"In the area but did not reach direct neighbourhood as weather improved"*
- *"In the neighbouring suburb."*
- *"In the suburb"*
- *"It burned passed us on the north side of Warrimoo. We live in the south side and had the great Western Highway between us and the fire"*
- *"it did not"*
- *"It was 6kms away"*
- *"it was in the valley but could have taken house if wind was bad"*

- *"it was located in the Weddin Mountains so not close to my property"*
- *"kilometres away"*
- *"Local area 1-2 km away"*
- *"loss of sheds, personal property, destruction of gardens"*
- *"Main fire was 25k away from home - involved with RFS"*
- *"Managed to stage head attack and protected house, lost gardens and a fence."*
- *"Mountain Lagoon - saw flames from property"*
- *"Mt York active front about 15km away, Linksview backburns downwind 6km"*
- *"N/A" X2*
- *"Near children's school"*
- *"Nearest fire was actually a result of emergency(?) backburning ... flare-ups on the day following the backburning threatened neighbours house."*
- *"Neighbouring town"*
- *"NIL"*
- *"no fire just heavy smoke"*
- *"No where near" X3*
- *"No where near, 30kg away"*
- *"Not Close at all" X4*
- *"not in direct area - but still felt effects in community"*
- *"Not in immediate area"*
- *"Not nearby"*
- *"Not really near my house"*
- *"not too close"*
- *"not very close"*
- *"on ember watch in case of wind shift , ignition within 2km, at closest 900m."*
- *"On next ridge, wind was favour able this time"*
- *"On the otherside of town but threat still there"*
- *"out of area"*
- *"outside my local area no threat"*
- *"Rear of property back burnt for protection"*
- *"RFS crews ensured WE didn't BURN"*
- *"RFS protected Blackheath with its back-burning program."*
- *"See Q39 above"*
- *"Several kilometres away."*
- *"Spot fire in neighbors hedge."*
- *"Started 6 doors up from my house"*
- *"stopped a few kms away. Thankful large HRB done last year to back of us."*
- *"Stopped at Bilpin/Mtn Lagoon"*
- *"Stopped at next suburb by backburning"*
- *"Stopped before getting into area"*
- *"stopped by rfs at bush path 4 properties away"*
- *"Suburb away" X2*
- *"Surrounding villages"*
- *"Thankfully didnt come within our vicinity on the day of the greatest threat"*
- *"That was the one two weeks prior to Links View"*
- *"The fire control efforts together with the abating extreme weather conditions meant the threat to the Central Blue Mountains was reduced"*
- *"Threat to mid mountains communities"*
- *"to the edge of the village the other side of the train line to me"*

- *"towns away"*
- *"Two streets away people were evacuated"*
- *"two suburbs away"*
- *"Was 5 km away but embers were blowing our way"*
- *"Was not very close."*
- *"was on alert"*
- *"was part of crew"*
- *"Was stopped in Grose Valley"*
- *"way off"*
- *"we live at leura and it got to the N side of blackheath"*
- *"We were told by rfs at community meeting that the fire was 1km away."*
- *"winds changed reducing threat to our property"*
- *"within 15km"*
- *"Within a couple of km's"*
- *"within local area"*

## Question 52. "What were your major concerns for the fire?"

- *"Child" at home was 19 years old*
- *"Adult child at home"*
- *"Arranging work schedule so I could be available for the RFS"*
- *"ASSIST OTHER LANDHOLDERS"*
- *"being away from Family because I was first response to fight fire"*
- *"Being home alone and not know what to do or what was going on. It all happened so quickly with little warning."*
- *"Brigade on standby"*
- *"Care for disabled young man in his own home"*
- *"Cats home alone and I was at work in Sydney"*
- *"Child at day care unable to reach"*
- *"Children = grandchildren"*
- *"Concern for neighbours"*
- *"Concern that if we ended up in danger a lot of others were in dire straits before us considering where the fire was in relation to our house"*
- *"convincing police and out of area group officer we were prepared and can read the conditions"*
- *"Defendability of old house"*
- *"Did not really know how to prepare home"*
- *"Didn't know if fire would come in our direction. Children were at school (WHS) and didn't collect them straight away as assumed safest in big group and didn't think fire was near there"*
- *"disability"*
- *"Family staying in mountains, property undefendable"*
- *"Fighting the fire storm as it approached where I was fighting it"*
- *"fire arrived just as our son was due home from school!"*
- *"Fire behaviour under prevailing weather conditions."*
- *"get to fire truck"*
- *"Had heavily pregnant niece in direct threat"*
- *"had to hose down hysterical neighbours and friends"*
- *"had to leave my kids at home to go and help fight the Hall Rd S44 fire"*
- *"Health of child with lung condition and effect smoke would have on her health"*
- *"Helping neighbours who didn't have a car."*
- *"husband away fighting fire left to manage fire plan"*
- *"I am a Staff member at a school with children living in the fire affected area. I was concerned to care for my Class."*
- *"I have a disability that limits mobility and my husband has a heart condition. - Concerned about when to leave safely"*
- *"I was not at home, separated by fire, children were in care of another adult."*
- *"immediate neighbours who have no idea. EXTREMELY POOR Council Traffic control within 1kl of home"*
- *"lack of mobile ph service"*
- *"Messages asking people to leave early. Fear of roads being blocked or having to drive through roads with fire already burning around"*
- *"Mid week presents problems when husbands work is 2-1/2 hours away"*
- *"My crew"*
- *"My son who is a RFS volunteer and went out for the long night of hard work"*
- *"Negative publicity in a tourist industry area is very harmful, caused a lot of financial hardship that is ongoing"*
- *"No water; no fire brigade; worry about neighbour's property; did not know whether neighbours were home; could not get through to 000; did not know about neighbour's pets"*



- *"not enough warning"*
- *"Not home when it started unsure if safe to go home."*
- *"Note: Family was not home"*
- *"nothing"*
- *"organising family around crew requirements"*
- *"out at fires with rfs unit"*
- *"out side my local area"*
- *"Parents lost their home on 17/10/13 in Winmalee & made me paranoid"*
- *"People in the area of fires"*
- *"police road blocks"*
- *"Potential loss of life; Certainty of people losing everthing; Terrible disruption to communities afterwards; Destruction of bushland, wild life, esp small animals and birds"*
- *"Pregnant"*
- *"Property not realistically defensible. Also were both in our seventies."*
- *"protection of overseas visitors"*
- *"Safety of family the clear priority. Protecting significant items such as photographs a lessor priority. Other items not so important."*
- *"safety of my son who is a member of RFS"*
- *"Saw smoke very close, very soon after that street was blocked by traffic."*
- *"Seen it before, knew what I was in for. Ordered to evac and ignored orders, will ignore orders again if required."*
- *"That fire would reach school and students"*
- *"That the lack of serious and useful information from RFS HQ/District Office and hence radio and television on which to base decisions of stay or leave was poor to say the least."*
- *"The catastrophic fuel buildup had them unfightable."*
- *"was aware of fire within minutes of it starting, had 3yr old with me and the house could always be better prepared, so arranged for 3yr old to go to sister in laws"*
- *"Was away for work"*
- *"We had no power and thus no updates via tv or internet and only some mobile phone reception due to smoke. We couldn't get timely updates and fires were incorrectly labelled under other suburbs so we couldn't ascertain where the fire actually was and both ends of our road was blocked. Police could not advise us of what was happening beyond stopping us leaving or entering the road."*
- *"we were in sydney at our other home during the fire"*
- *"welfare of fellow fire fighters out fighting the fire"*
- *"Wife on the fire truck"*
- *"Worried re possible traffic congestion"*

## Question 60. "what did you do once you had found out about the fire?"

- *"7km bush covered road to safety. fires lasted for about 2 months in total."*
- *"Activated community fire unit"*
- *"Actively involved with local RFS"*
- *"all in the wrong area"*
- *"As Captain of Balmoral I became Balmoral Control and started getting crews where they were needed most"*
- *"As we are all RFS members, if the fire got close, two of us would be at home and two out with the Brigade."*
- *"ASSIST NEIGHBOURS"*
- *"At the time I heard of fire in the area I headed for home to defend. At the time we knew the property was under threat there was no time to defend it. There are 2 decisions here but your question implies there is only one decision to make."*
- *"attempt to get to fire truck, avoid road blocks"*
- *"attempt to get to fire truck"*
- *"Attended my RFS stn and started organising a crew change for that night"*
- *"be on standby for RFS"*
- *"Became involved in fire fighting in FCC"*
- *"both volunteer members so went to fight the fire"*
- *"called husband at work. Left children in daycare till I calmed down and direction of fire was clear"*
- *"Could not get home." X2*
- *"Couldn't get home. Children couldn't get out of the house. Phones kept cutting out."*
- *"Decision based on local/ inside knowledge"*
- *"Disabled mother was pulled from burning property by fire crews, put into car and left immediately"*
- *"Evacuate family and me to stay and defend"*
- *"Fire in yard, both leave straight away"*
- *"Fire really wasn't near our property or threatening us in anyway so kept up-to-date with reports and prepared valuables/home \ "just in case\ " but otherwise carried on life as normal."*
- *"Fires were not a direct threat to property on the day of the Linksview fire"*
- *"Get home to collect the dog and open all the gates to give stock open access to dams"*
- *"get home to defend property"*
- *"Go and get on the firetruck and help put the bastard out"*
- *"go home (was at work)"*
- *"got on a fire truck and went towards it"*
- *"Got on the Fire truck and go and fight the fire"*
- *"Got son to leave the area, we stayed away"*
- *"Grab pets and leave"*
- *"had friends updating my mum and would get her if need be"*
- *"Headed up to Brigade Station, Due to the fact was night shift at Mt Vic Fire"*
- *"home to collect pets and emergency pack then collect kids from care and go to safe location"*
- *"Husband fighting fire elsewhere"*
- *"i didnt know till i got the sms that yanderra was already on fire"*
- *"i dont live in springwood"*
- *"I got stuck into the RFS bureaucrats for causing the fire (NO BURNOFFS!!!!!!)"*
- *"I live alone and I was not leaving."*
- *"I was in Victoria, my partner on way home from work - neither of us knew about the fire until he met a road block - and I received a text almost at the same time .As neither of us had any knowledge of the fire or the imminent risk until that time - - dogs were at home - plan was for a fire threat day - to take dogs into city to family - just in case - as had no prior info - plan was not enacted . Partner and family then got a boat in the dark and went to property to collect dogs as road was shut"*

- *"I was not home. Tried to get home but could not. My son was at home. . He stayed and fought fires. I was concerned about his safety. Told him to collect pets and leave. He said it was ok and stayed and saved our house"*
- *"I was working in the Lithgow Fire Control Centre and was unable to leave. My husband was at home and started preparations to evacuate"*
- *"If fire got to certain point, or wind changed to certain direction, leave. Car was packed and ready, animals were contained and ready, had emergency clothes, food and water ready. Made sure elderly neighbours HAD a plan and HAD executed it."*
- *"informed partner who was sick at home and unaware of fire to prepare documents to pack and prepare house"*
- *"Kids school on lockdown, wait for evacuation then attend fire station for duty"*
- *"LEAVE WORK TO SAVE PHOTOS AND COMPUTERS"*
- *"Left work, drove straight home to get my daughter"*
- *"Make preparations for property and immediate surrounds - we were fortunate in that we had more warning than those at Winmalee and Mt Victoria"*
- *"me - RFS control ctr . Wife local fire truck"*
- *"move animals to relatives and organise accommodation out of area"*
- *"My husband and son-in-law hosed the roof down and got somethings together, but the fire reached our property so fast that they did not have very much time and had to leave. The wind was so strong and the fire was heading straight for our property. Only for the Rural Fire Service we would not had a house to come back to."*
- *"My wife was going to a friends home in Sydney and I was going to be with my RFS brigade."*
- *"N/A" X2*
- *"Never got to evacuation level risk"*
- *"No 1 option, but with important caveat - that if the wind got strong, we would abandon the house and go to the emergency shelter. We were confident of being able to defend against ember attack and thought that by monitoring the wind direction & strength (BOM) we would have adequate warning if the situation became indefensible"*
- *"No children normally at home but grandchild at school while her mum was at work with no ability to know about the fire."*
- *"No choice had to stay away only one road in."*
- *"Not in local area. Had to go back to work"*
- *"Observed radio warnings to not proceed home up M4 due smoke and traffic. Waited till early evening before setting off. Arranged to go to friends close by and wait till my road was open."*
- *"on out of area crew from gosford"*
- *"ONCE I GOT HOME DECIDED TO EVACUATE NO RFS OR EMERGENCY SERVICES ALL IN LITHGOW"*
- *"One at home to monitor situation and keep travelling irrigator and pumps operational"*
- *"Packed necessities, made arrangements for children not to come home and kept an eye out, had workers leave property early."*
- *"Prepared evacuation kit but didn't collect children from school until knew fire wasn't coming this way"*
- *"rang me sister she broke through a road block got me pets and mum and dads documents and got out of there"*
- *"relocated parents to our house. husband stayed to defend. i went to rfs"*
- *"Respond on strike team"*
- *"Respond to assist"*
- *"Return home from work. The rest of the family were cut off"*
- *"RFS duties"*
- *"rfs evacuated me to local stn with dialysis machine once i got to my home"*
- *"Road was cut in both directions- told wife to sit tight unless evacuated"*
- *"Spot fire from Linksvie rd reached Birdwood ave that quickly had no time to decide to do anything but fight"*
- *"Staer Fire Plan Immediatly"*
- *"Stay away x 3, 1 home, 1 school"*

- *"stay, clear round home, fight fire, smoke got too bad and we evacuated."*
- *"Strong winds were in our favour, they swept the fire away from us."*
- *"tried to get home but no time as fire was too sudden"*
- *"Tried to get property but was stopped by police although it was safe to remove horses and float however they burnt"*
- *"Tried to return home, but was unable to reach the house"*
- *"Try and contact family members away from home to determine they were safe. Rang family for emotional support. No power so sat in car to listen to radio update then walked to Hawkesbury Road to find out what was happening - Hawkesbury Rd in gridlock so walked to top of Singles Ridge Rd then met friends who'd lost houses and provided comfort. Went back home to talk to husband about what to do. Stayed to find out from RFS what was happening in our street."*
- *"Try to get home"*
- *"Try to get home from work place in Parramaatta"*
- *"Try to get to home"*
- *"Unable to collect children of return home due to fire"*
- *"Was at school in a lockdown"*
- *"Was evacuated"*
- *"was home alone, then everyone came to help prepare house and fight fire if necessary"*
- *"Was trapped on peninsular and had bags and car packed ready to evacuate if and when needed with pets close by."*
- *"Wasn't sure what to do after receiving emergency warning, because it was not really clear for us."*
- *"we did however organise people, pets, horses to leave so we could leave quickly if need be (which we ended up doing)"*
- *"We had to flee as we had no warning. My husband jumped the fence with 2 children and I got stuck in the fire picking up a 3rd child from his burning pre school. We had no warning the fire was so close."*
- *"We knew there was no immediate threat to our area so stayed home and monitored on tv, twitter and scanner"*
- *"We went active with RFS for firefighting and other family were away on holidays"*
- *"We were actively involved in Fire operations with RFS"*
- *"We were in lockdown at st Columbas while husband at home fighting fire"*
- *"we were not at home and road was blocked so we could not return home"*
- *"We were on holiday (overseas) and came home next day as planned."*
- *"We were waiting for the insurance man to come pay out after our last fire. He looked worried. So we started packing. Then we got the sms and got the hell out."*
- *"We, in the fire truck, were at another reignition off Hawkesbury Rd and saw smoke/heard radio and went to Linksvie to defend homes"*
- *"Went home to collect my passport and other papers."*
- *"Went to Balmoral to work with brigade"*
- *"Wife evacuate with valuables, husband Stay and Defend."*
- *"Wife to Stay at home with the Kid and Dad to go and fight the fire"*
- *"working house members came home immediately to help defend"*

## Question 61. "What information you use to make your decision about what to do in response to the fire?"

- "12 years rfs service"
- "30 yrs as a firefighter/ author / journalist"
- "Active RFS officer and knew situation intimately"
- "Advised by NSW fire and rescue"
- "Again it is not one decision but a number of decisions. The key determining factor was how much time we thought we had to act. The first decision was made assuming there was time to act and the leave decision was based on the realisation that there was insufficient time to defend."
- "Also, helicopter above with siren, no trucks in the street."
- "Calls from FCC to assist"
- "community meeting"
- "Community Meeting at Katoomba"
- "continual vigilance"
- "Drove to pick up kids from school and saw the fire crossing the road to our valley."
- "Email from school Principal"
- "Emergency alert on my mobile and then home phone"
- "Emergency Warning"
- "Experiance with RFS"
- "fire call, smoke in air"
- "found RFS site unhelpful when fire was imminent threat - hard to ascertain where fire was and prediction of advance - twitter provided a lot of info ( not all accurate ) - as did radio reports from helicopters in the area. . Had one friend scanning all social media - another friend - called their friend a helicopter"
- "From acting principal"
- "Go fight it in the fire truck as we were nearly at the source of the fire"
- "How quickly the fire was moving towards our property"
- "I could see the thick smoke from my office in Concord West"
- "I told the RFS the fire was there (hawkesbury road fire)"
- "I was acting as a dep group officer so was aware of situation on the fireground and was in consistent contact with family via SMS"
- "I work for NPWS with access to information from fire ground"
- "info on web was not updated quickly enough for us to use. We needed to leave earlier than this." "information at rfs unit i was with"
- "Inspection of smoke from end of my street"
- "Involved with fighting fires with RFS"
- "Knew road would be blocked and no way to get home"
- "Knowing the wind was in my favour"
- "Message from telephone tower saying fire approaching etc"
- "Mobile phone contact, when it worked, with my son who was at home. Looking after our home and the neighbours property as they were not at home. Also svaed their property!!!"
- "my daughter insisted I leave"
- "my friend called me to tell me yanderra had been evacuated"
- "My level headed neighbor."
- "My pager went off. I was on the truck that was first on scene at Browns road"
- "my wife calling me who also is a member"
- "nsw emergency evacuation txt"
- "Observation of weather and smoke"
- "Only collected children after call from them at school"
- "Origin of fire, prevailing wind and weather forecast"

- *"Our belief we could defend our home"*
- *"our eyes and lungs"*
- *"Our house is near the designated safer place where they were encouraging people to go. Children were ready to leave with adult if instructed or threatened"*
- *"our school 1 block from my house was evacuated we were told 10 minutes to pick up our kids or they would be ferried out by car/police to a safer place, SMS warning to leave came after that, I could see the smoke and flames in the distance it was getting closer and I did not want my children anywhere near the fire path"*
- *"Our son rang from home; fire imminent"*
- *"Pager" X2*
- *"Personal knowledge from 22 years RFS service"*
- *"Phone message from RFS"*
- *"photos emailed to me at work from daughter"*
- *"police"*
- *"Police siren driving past sounding horn, taken as a warning to leave"*
- *"preschool called to say being evacuated"*
- *"previous experience"*
- *"previously prepared Bushfire Survival Plan"*
- *"recieved SMS @ 11.25 to evacuate if safe to do so, so hitched our caravan and left with dogs"*
- *"Rfs"*
- *"RFS community meeting"*
- *"RFS duty"*
- *"RFS member"*
- *"RFS siren from fire truck that came down our street"*
- *"rfs sms"*
- *"rfs sms message received"*
- *"RFS staff"*
- *"rfs telephone advice to leavek"*
- *"risk assessed based on prevailing and predicted weather"*
- *"Road was blocked"*
- *"Scanner and rfs family"*
- *seeing the severity of the smoke"*
- *"Severe smoke"*
- *"Smoke was very close."*
- *"sms alert"*
- *"SMS and Phone Call from RFS"*
- *"SMS from RFS"*
- *"sms message on phone to shelter from fire and not leave"*
- *"some evacd on the Sunday - we evacd on Tuesday arvo"*
- *"telephone conversation with husband. watching the fire and direction it was travelling as well as wind direction"*
- *"Telephone emergency call and SMS message"*
- *"Text message Emergency a Warning to leave Yanderra immediately"*
- *"The fire was buring at such a rate, that their saftety was more important that the house. The fire was burning right along our fenceline and heading for the house."*
- *"The houses across the road went up in a fire ball ad I was trapped by the fire."*
- *"The reason I have not checked the RFS website or RFS social media was because there was no information of any value posted other than the standard see-sawing between Watch and Evacuate"*
- *"Twitter"*
- *"Volunteered for duty"*

- *"We could see flames on the property, and left in a panic. No emergency warnings had been issued at that time"*
- *"We had a family discussion, knowing someone needed to be here to run the pumps/hoses/sprinklers etc. but we could not ignore the rest of the community."*
- *"We went to the top of our street and saw the fire going towards Winmalee, away from us. My son walked down to help a friend (ex-rural firey) down near Ellison School"*
- *"We were most of the way driving to Brisbane, so staying away was really the only option."*
- *"yanderra station was called to balmoral fire so as soon as it lit I knew where it was going"*
- *Years of living in the bush being trained in the rfs and common sence"*

## Question 66. "What were your triggers to leave?"

- *"Advice on TV to leave on the Wednesday that bad weather was expected."*
- *"Air was too hot to breathe; no emergency services nearby"*
- *"alerted via text message addressing adjacent suburbs, though not ours (yellow rock) - second message concerning yellow rock arrive after home was destroyed (or impacted)"*
- *"BOM - wind direction - westerly"*
- *"Children"*
- *"children obeyed neighbour rather than follow plan"*
- *"community fire unit members advised leaving early."*
- *"Daughters school and friends impacted. Left area when potential catastrophic day forecast, concerns about roads being closed. Daughter was doing HSC and very traumatised even though not directly impacted."*
- *"did not go"*
- *"Did not leave"*
- *"Did not need to leave home"*
- *"did not receive emergency warning until after I left"*
- *"Didn't leave"*
- *"didn't leave was firefighting and then parents were at work"*
- *"Fire truck pulled up outside ready to tackle fire in the bushland between our street and adjacent street"*
- *"husband left to fight fire"*
- *"I am the Yanderra Capt. Had to defend the village as a whole"*
- *"I didn't leave but children stayed with friends due to school being cut off by Londonderry rd and Blacktown rd fires"*
- *"I JUST HAD A VERY BAD FEELING THIS WAS A TERRIBLY BAD FIRE COMING AND NO ONE WAS AROUND IT APPEARED, TO HELP. GUT INSTINCT"*
- *"I work at a RFS fire control centre daughter called me from home and said there was a fire coming at her so I left work straight away"*
- *"If I had stayed people would have risked their lives to protect me. I could not let this happen."*
- *"In RFS"*
- *"Life is more important than property"*
- *"no home due to working"*
- *"Not wanting to wait until too late to. Leave as Hawkesbury Rd only route out and easily blocked"*
- *"Note - house in flames approx 5 minutes after first indication of possible risk in area."*
- *"Pager to get on the trucks"*
- *"Part of our plan"*
- *"police evacuated the wife, I went to fire station to roll out 2nd vehicle"*
- *"Responded to help"*
- *"RFS members on the fire truck & at control ctr"*
- *"Rfs sirens, sound of popping close by, thick smoke and darkness"*
- *"Risk to children so they were evacuated to relatives while husband and I stayed to fight fires with RFS"*
- *"Sent child to family approx 2km further upwind"*
- *"sent children away to other family"*
- *"so more preparations/defence could be made..main risk was ember."*
- *"Son went to help his friend remove animals from a house near Ellison School on first day of fire."*
- *"to keep baby away from smoke and danger"*
- *"Trying to get disabled mother out, fire crews pulled her from property"*
- *"very strong winds fanning the fires directly towards our house"*
- *"We left for a safer place and returned when the RFS arrived, which was just before the fire arrived."*
- *"We were on holiday overseas."*



- *"when fire reached a certain point (IE Mountain Lagoon Road)"*

Question 70. "Where did you first go (after they had left due to the fire threat)?"

- *"after dropping horses at another property away from fire zone"*
- *"Caravan park 15 mins away"*
- *"did not go"*
- *"evacuated twice"*
- *"Family went. I was still at home"*
- *"Fighting fires with RFS"*
- *"Finnan Park, as we had a caravan for accommodation"*
- *"Finnan Park, as we had a caravan for accommodation and that's where the RFS headquarters were set up"*
- *"fire shed for the callout"*
- *"fire station"*
- *"fire truck"*
- *"Firestation RFS members"*
- *"Highway"*
- *"Home"*
- *"Hotel" X2*
- *"I couldnt get out at all so went to an area previously burned out then was trapped there too."*
- *"Left to stay in the country."*
- *"Local fire brigade"*
- *"Local shops (Hawkesbury Road) - (Question 61) - There for only 5-10 min then returned"*
- *"McDonalds Richmond NSW"*
- *"Mittagong RFS Fire Station"*
- *"motel"*
- *"nothing setup at Blackheath - Springwood wouldn't take pets - had to go to Cambridge park by train with dog"*
- *"RFS Brigade Shed"*
- *"RFS station" X3*
- *"Staging area"*
- *"stayed home"*
- *"The pub."*
- *"To Hawkesbury lookout because the bush had previously been burned in the weeks before."*
- *"To the coast"*
- *"Was told to go to bargo oval, then onto tahmoor oval as fire was threatening bargo also"*
- *"Went to centre on Wed.23 Oct. when advised to leave early."*
- *"winmalee rfs stn"*
- *"Work"*
- *"work and then friends"*
- *"Workplace"*

### Question 73. "Why did you stay (at the property during the fire)?"

- *"Active member of local RFS brigade"*
- *"all neighbours decided to stay and defend until it was unsafe to do so"*
- *"Assist with fire-fighting duties"*
- *"But we left on the day it was advised by the Emergency service to leave."*
- *"BY THE TIME MY HUSBAND GOT THERE THE STREET AND HOUSES WERE ON FIRE. THERE WERE NO FIRE BRIGADE IN ATTENDANCE"*
- *"check for burning embers and keep water in gutters"*
- *"Decided to defend as we were prepared"*
- *"Decided we were well prepared and could defend the house and ourselves; unlikely that emergency crews would come down our street, so our house would not be defended even if it was quite defensible."*
- *"Defend other properties"*
- *"fight fire"*
- *"Fighting Fires with RFS"*
- *"Fire did not reach our \"leave now\" trigger point"*
- *"fire not in my local area"*
- *"Fire was headed away from us on the first day. It was a big problem to us a few days later when the fires headed back towards Faulconbridge, that was when we had live embers landing in the yard. We had been packed for the entire week after the first fire near the Golf Course in Linksvie Rd. We have issue if the fire is in the gully between Faulconbridge point and Linksvie and if the wind is blowing from the North West."*
- *"Getting bored of this"*
- *"house is safer than the road"*
- *"House prepared and husband decided to stay and defend property. I left with children"*
- *"Husband came home from work to defend"*
- *"Husband stayed to defend with neighbours"*
- *"Husband stayed to put out spot fires"*
- *"I'm really confused here. I was away the day the fire broke out but on the following week when danger was highest I stayed at home. Your questions have asked about both occasions but this set of questions doesn't stipulate to which occasion they refer so I don't know how to answer because my actions were different on each occasion. I was away \"by chance\" at work on day fires started but deliberately stayed home the following week when the danger was at its highest."*
- *"I am a volunteer firefighter so stayed to fight the fire"*
- *"I am Captain of Balmoral RFB"*
- *"I didn't stay, I was actively participating in RFS firefighting activities."*
- *"I had a job to do managing the fire event"*
- *"I stayed to do what I could sensibly do to protect my home."*
- *"I understood fire behaviour"*
- *"I wanted to wait and see."*
- *"I was \"off duty\" and sent home for a rest"*
- *"I was at work. My son was at home. I tried to get home but could not. There was no advance warnings, SMS MESSAGES RECEIVED AFTER IT WAS FAR TOO LATE TO GET HOME. I LEFT WORK ON REQUEST OF MY SON AT 1.45PM BUT GOT STUCK IN TRAFFIC AND GAVE UP AT 7.45PM. SMS MESSAGES CAME HOURS AFTER THE FIRES!!"*
- *"I was trained"*
- *"If the wind changed directions and came towards us we wanted to protect our home"*
- *"it did not threaten us"*
- *"It was safe for my wife and I was away fighting fires."*
- *"looking after frail lady who couldn't be moved..."*
- *"Member of Rfs"*
- *"My Husband decided to stay and fight"*
- *"My husband stayed and decided there was not undue risk but also keen to stay and defend property"*

- *"needed to prepare property a bit more"*
- *"No immediate threat"*
- *"No need"*
- *"no need to go"*
- *"No risk"*
- *"no threat"*
- *"No Time To Leave"*
- *"non reason to leave"*
- *"not directly affected"*
- *"Not impacted by fire"*
- *"not threat"*
- *"Our belief we could protect our home"*
- *"out of direct fire area"*
- *"property needed more preparation"*
- *"Returned to property to defend"*
- *"Rfs firefighter"*
- *"RFS said ok at this stage but removed some animals anyway"*
- *"Roads were cut- safer to stay put in prepared property"*
- *"Someone had to start the pumps and direct the hoses"*
- *"stay and defend"*
- *"stay and defend because unlikely to have more rental accommodation available in the area and already enough moving house after June fire"*
- *"stay and defend."*
- *"stay and fight no time to run away"*
- *"Stayed for asw long as I could, evacuated, then returned 10 min later..."*
- *"Stayed to protect the property"*
- *"The rfs informed us the fire was not in our immediate vicinity so it was up to us if we should want to leave or not at that time and we had faith that the rfs and Ses keeping tabs on the fires would give us direction when necessary we were in no need to evacuate however they did say we could voluntarily evacuate!"*
- *"To continue prep and protect property"*
- *"To defend home"*
- *"to defend our property and animals"*
- *"To defend property"*
- *"to far away from fire"*
- *"To protect house" X2*
- *"To protect the house and property"*
- *"To put out fire"*
- *"Told to by Parnter"*
- *"Trained volunteer with well set up house"*
- *"volunteer firefighter involved in firefighting operations"*
- *"waited for the evacuation sms to come through"*
- *"was not at home"*
- *"Wasn't required too."*
- *"Watering house but prepared to drive away if necessary"*
- *"We were on a wait and watch notice..."*
- *"we were sage"*
- *"wife and kid stayed i went with rfs"*
- *"would have stayed but could not get home"*

## Question 80. "Did you receive any help in protecting your property?"

- *2 male neighbours across the road stayed to fight as they were well prepared with back up power and water tanks. they told us to go to the lookout (previously burnt) and they saved their own homes and us neighbours."*
- *"All the above"*
- *"Back burn at rear of property"*
- *"Back burning behind our property"*
- *"backburn conducted directly in front of our home, fire trucks on our driveway"*
- *"believed local unit back burned around this street - RFS active in protecting all area -"*
- *"Don't know possibly RFS"*
- *"During ember fire in yard, neighbours and community fire unit assisted. Fire services advised us that it was not an immediate danger and at that time we did not need to evacuate. The RFS were fabulous at reassuring us about what actions we needed to take."*
- *"eventually 2 RFS Cat 1's attended and aided with head attack."*
- *"Family tried to come but weren't allow access past road blocks"*
- *"fire brigades were in street"*
- *"Fire didn't come close"*
- *"fire didn't impact in the long term"*
- *"fire not in local area"*
- *"Fire only approached to 500 m. We remained on alert for 2 days, monitoring wind, RFS web, radio, with protective gear etc on the ready."*
- *"Followed by the fire fighters arriving approximately 45 minutes after main fire front passed."*
- *"Friends offered to clear gutters but we did not want to risk the falling off our roof."*
- *"Helicopters saved us. Neighbour's fence and tree caught fire and we didn't know until the helicopter water bombed it. The embers had jumped our house to start that fire."*
- *"Helicopters, lots of helicopters"*
- *"house was not in danger"*
- *"I left but a trapped neighbour checked on the property but could do nothing."*
- *"lakesland RFS"*
- *"N/A" X2*
- *"NA\_CFU team did some preparatory work in the lead-up to a possible impact which did not occur"*
- *"na but community fire unit were working in the neighborhood preparing property"*
- *"Nearby neighbours looked in the property from time to time while I was away and there was backburning smouldering."*
- *"Neighbours were also well organised."*
- *"Neighbours" X3*
- *"Neighbour assisted also"*
- *"Neighbours extinguished fire on our property"*
- *"Neighbours only"*
- *"no action needed"*
- *"No assistance required"*
- *"No direct threat"*
- *"No need"*
- *"No need beyond looking out for ember attack"*
- *"No. . but their trucks were parked right around our property"*
- *"none required"*
- *"None what so ever they let it burn (RFS)"*
- *"Not applicable"*
- *"Not applicable. Closest fire was a backburn at the end of the day."*
- *"not impacted"*

- *"not relevant this is a bad survey"*
- *"Not required" X3*
- *"not required, the firies kept the fires to the edge of town"*
- *"Other crews"*
- *"Our wonderful neighbour protected our home as we just left with 2 small children."*
- *"Possibly some neighbours who stayed may have assisted the firefighters as they defended their own homes"*
- *"RFS"*
- *"RFS trucks cruising the hwy"*
- *"The fire two weeks before Links View"*
- *"unnecessary"*
- *"Unneeded though some aided neighbours with potentialy needed sandbags"*
- *"visitors"*

## Question 100. "What was the most reliable source of information throughout the fire?"

- *"ABC news 24 had brilliant coverage"*
- *"ABC TV was also good"*
- *"All above were not localise for the effected area"*
- *"and our brigade radios"*
- *"Available 24/7."*
- *"because we had been evacuated, we had no internet access and the radio reports were far behind what had actually occurred, but there were othere fires around Newcastle that night"*
- *"blue mountains firewatch"*
- *"Blue Mountains Firewatch Facebook Page"*
- *"face book and local rfs"*
- *"facebook and twitter for the rfs was really good frnsw was abit slow with the info and rfs website info was horribly out of date fb and twitter pumped it out faster"*
- *"firewatch blue mountains"*
- *"friends on facebook.."*
- *"FRNSW/RFS Radio via Broadcastify"*
- *"How can we tell who was the most reliable source of information? We used ABC radio and TV as well as Facebook & Twitter, but how would we know to extent to which the information is accurate and current?"*
- *"I really didn't care about the warnings. I could see the fire, I guaged its speed and progress and was more concerned with final preparations than warning messages"*
- *"It was quite a few hours before any info came through"*
- *"IT WAS TOO FAST, NO TIME FOR ANY OF THAT."*
- *"Local fire station Facebook page"*
- *"Local RFS Facebook updates"*
- *"local rfs members facebook page"*
- *"Looking at situation for myself from local vantage point"*
- *"My son who was home during the fires"*
- *"nephew works for smh.com.au"*
- *"No electricity so felt isolated aand alone"*
- *"no info for hours, we went for a drive to see if we were allowed back in town, while in our street radio said our whole street and cobham were on fire, after fire had gone."*
- *"Note - my friends are well connected with Local Council, RFS etc"*
- *"one of our local firies posting messages on our community facebook page was also very helpful as she dispeled some rumours very quickly"*
- *"only when power was available"*
- *"Personal observation - looking out the window!"*
- *"phoning neighbours"*
- *"returning firefighters"*
- *"RFS and FB (Gloucester / GL) were both good"*
- *"RFS Facebook Page"*
- *"RFS website and TV"*
- *"Scanner app and rfs in family"*
- *"Self"*
- *"SMS on Mobile"*
- *"sometimes crashed though"*
- *"TuneIn Radio - Blue Mountains GRN Channel"*
- *"we all helped each other"*

- *"we used multiple sites, all of above except twitter"*
- *"Working in Control Centre"*



## Question 101. "What is your preferred method for receiving warnings in future events?"

- *"1.FB, 2. Twitter, 3. Radio, 4. TV. TEXTING IS SHIT AND THE PHONE CALL IS PROBABLY SHIT TOO"*
- *"All"*
- *"Although we don't get reception at home"*
- *"At Yekllow Rock mobile phone reception via Optus is useless, All mobile reception needs to be substantialIt improved. Even though I was at work in Penrith all sms warnings were recieved well after the fires as I was stuck in traffic trying to get home, The fire starterd so fast fast warnings were insufficient. There were no early warnings of any indication that made me feel as if I should have stayed at home."*
- *"but the message has to be more precised, please"*
- *"I call the regional RFS directly to get the right info."*
- *"I will smell it so not a consideration. SMS would be nice if I am not at home."*
- *"Loud haler on truck..."*
- *"my eyes and nose"*
- *"No electricity meant TV and phone didn't work, mobile died and couldn't recharge so knew very little"*
- *"no mobile phone reception, have apetition ongoing at the moment"*
- *"only one of our 3 mobile phones received the SMS, one ogt a take shelter msg later and the other no msg yet"*
- *"Providing the information is current, complete and useful on which to base decisions"*
- *"Recorded message by phone"*
- *"RFS website" X2*
- *"sms is preferred but we DONT get mobile coverage at home"*
- *"The mobile alert is very useful - unfortunately we have very little signal in our home."*
- *"There was an issue with my mobile as it was purchased in Wollongong and I did not receive any messages about local fires...i.e. change of address is a problem"*
- *"They need to come sooner. They'd lost 50+ houses by the time it went out!"*
- *"Up to date television coverage"*
- *"We have received timey sms messages in the past. This time the fires were too fast and the lines were down. No communication was reveived via mobile communication."*
- *"we have very limited mobile access here :-("*
- *"Why choose? Surely multiple methods can be utilised at little extra cost once the message is decided upon."*
- *"With correct information would have saved animals life and a \$15,000 horse float"*
- *"you can prepare while listening to radio"*

### Question 103. "How did you find out about the community meeting?"

- *"Asked by RFS if I would attend, am RFS Captain"*
- *"Attended as RFS volunteer"*
- *"Balmoral RFB"*
- *"Blue Mountains City Council"*
- *"Email"*
- *"Email from Phil Koperberg"*
- *"given a note"*
- *"Handouts from emergency management people"*
- *"husband is captain"*
- *"I called the regional RFS"*
- *"I helped run it. The RFS was howled down!!"*
- *"Leaflets in mail"*
- *"Letter box drop" X4*
- *"Letterbox and Firewise email"*
- *"local brigade letter drop"*
- *"local letterbox drop by RFS"*
- *"Local newspaper"*
- *"local paper"*
- *"Local paper"*
- *"Local rfs brigades had community meetings and was advertised locally"*
- *"local rfs flyers"*
- *"Neighbour told me it was on - no idea how he knew about it."*
- *"Newsletter"*
- *"notice on community board"*
- *"Notices in shop windows in Leura"*
- *"Notices in town"*
- *"notification at local shopping centre"*
- *"Pamphlet dropped off by Medlow RFS"*
- *"police came to door for 1st meeting, then RFS website for next meeting"*
- *"prior visit by Emergency Services"*
- *"SES volunteers door to door and via pamphlets"*
- *"Signs at mall"*
- *"volunteers"*
- *"was required to address questions"*
- *"We organised it"*
- *"went with mum who lost her house"*
- *"Worked at Recovery Centre, Springwood"*

## Further Comments

- *"1. RFS website updating was sometimes late and so was often contradicted by more timely radio briefings. 2. Winmalee High School was in lock-down on 17 October for approx. 7 hours and during that time teachers received little official communication from emergency services. Given the presence of hundreds of people, mainly children, this seems to be a major breakdown."*
- *"A devastating thing to go through the prospect of losing your house several times. We're very lucky not to have unlike so many. Our plan was always to get out early as we have young kids, so I never thought about the prospect of being stuck. A lot of emphasis is place on people leaving early & not staying to defend, which I completely agree with, but we never planned for a fire that wouldn't give us the choice to leave. People need to know what to do if it's too late to go. A lot of my friends had no idea there was a fire as it was so quick. They literally had to run for their lives whilst their homes burnt."*
- *"A lack of mobile coverage in our street (Ridge View Cl, Winmalee) together with frequent power cuts makes it very difficult to keep informed with mobile SMS and house phone warnings as well as internet searches such as RFS and local RFS updates. I strongly believe this is our greatest threat."*
- *"All the firefighters did a fantastic job and we are truly grateful for everything they did."*
- *"Answers may be misleading from RFS members, they don't reflect the information flows from within the service"*
- *"As a member of a District Office at the time was very useful. I am not sure now how up to date my information will be."*
- *"As I live in a very high fire-risk area, and have experienced an extreme bushfire (Christmas Day 2001), I have spent considerable effort making sure I have excellent protection around my property. As well, all of the property owners in my area are members of Firewise, and we have regular meetings discussing strategies in the event of fire, and making sure that we understand and can operate each others' fire-prevention systems."*
- *"Being able to listen to the RFS radio app (hearing fire personnel in the field) helped to know what was happening immediately. We only evacuated for a very short time (approx. 20 mins.) We decided to try and return to protect our property. We didn't have a fire front, but ember attack. If we hadn't returned, we may not have had our home survive the fire. As mentioned earlier, the helicopter did two water drops which alerted us to the fire threat of the neighbours house (they were not home). Also, if we hadn't had a hazard reduction 12 months ago in the adjacent bush, we feel that we would have lost our home. There were no trucks in the street (except one that apparently took a wrong turn in the hours after the initial threat). The bush across the road from us continued to ignite hours after the initial threat. We are so grateful to the helicopters and volunteers who worked so hard throughout the crisis. My husband had let his volunteer work in the RFS lapse, and this experience has prompted him to join up again and get involved. Thanks for the opportunity to tell our story."*
- *"Being in an area with limited mobile signal, the phone alerts are vital. Unfortunately, in the second fires to affect our area (the linksview rd fires) our power and phone lines went out at the beginning of the fire so we received no alert and because of the lack of mobile signal, we received no sms alert (well we did, but only once we'd left the area) During the first fire (Hawkesbury Rd, a couple of weeks earlier), we'd felt very well informed thanks to the sms and phone alerts, plus being able to access the RFS sites to check where the fire actually was - this gave us a sense of complacency so, when the Linksview fire impacted us, we felt more adrift without the information at our fingertips. I would like to reiterate the incredible work that the RFS and their back up units did, they were amazing."*
- *"Bell residents were evacuated twice. Firstly to Lithgow, then again to Bilpin. Each place is outside Blue Mountains Fire Control area and nobody had any information about our area."*
- *"biggest concern was children at local school directly impacted by fire while at work out of area. very little information was available as to the childrens welfare - only word of mouth. mobile phone networks were jamming at the peak of the fire situation."*
- *"Cant thank RFS enough !!!"*
- *"Congrats to firefighters, after first day felt resources sufficiently available to protect life and properties"*
- *"Couldn't answer some questions correctly as not providing sufficient options. . At work that day & couldn't get home .. Didn't have power or land line to help access up to date information"*
- *"Do we really need the RFS commissioner to give the roundup for the days events. No he's the bloody leader."*
- *"Excellent survey. Fantastic work by RFS and Commissioner Shane....."*
- *"feel some of the media reports from the Blue Mountians were to alarmist, and to general. The whole of the mountains were NOT under fire and the reports made it sound as if we were, Tourism is is still feeling the effects of tourists staying away, even after all these months. The VOULINTEERS did a GREAT job in controlling the Mt York/Lithogw fires or my answers could of been very different."*
- *"Fire came on very quick, would of liked more warning"*
- *"Fires Near Me App desperately needs an update. Doesn't work on iOS7!"*

- *"Furies- job well done. THANK YOU"*
- *"First of all, thank you for this survey and for helping the community during a fire. Secondly, personally we need a bit more explanations about the different warning messages, because it was a bit confusing on the day. So could there be a scale like we have for the fire rating. When to evacuate, when to seek shelter, etc... thank you very much."*
- *"Found local community fire unit people to be on a bit of a power trip and advising residents to evacuate when rfs were not doing so. The fires were 15km from us and it was suggested that I leave early just incase which I did, but neighbours who stayed were told to leave by cfu on afternoon of the predicted worst weather day, despite fire/embers not coming anywhere near here. The amount of authority they have (or don't have) should be made clearer."*
- *"Get the official maps out to the volunteers, the community meetings and the community. They are on the official RFS network and updated regularly. The community needs to know the threats, the strategies and the options. We are not stupid or thick and do not overact or panic unlike some with the emergency services who should know better. If the RFS doesn't take this on board, they will be overtaken by social media and networks of informed and professional people who are frustrated at the lack of common sense displayed during emergency periods. If the RFS wants the community to respect and acknowledge the combined efforts of all fire fighting agencies, then the RFS needs to be honest in its media delivery. More Information and less spin."*
- *"Go the fireys!"*
- *"Good work. Keep it up"*
- *"Great job. While doing the survey I did find it a bit difficult separating my experience from my families at times, as I stayed home at the time they left. I either left those bits blank or answered according to what they told me at the time. My wife will still do it separately to describe how they felt leaving the area."*
- *"Great work RFS"*
- *"Had previously experienced \"emergency\" situation in Christchurch NZ so knew importance of preparedness even though no previous bushfire experience. Sept fire and community meeting helped understand what to do in Oct. Initially unsure if over-reaction to implement plan when fire was not close but treated as a practice and it paid off in understanding for future. Instructions in Bush Fire plan are good but only fully make sense when you have tried them out and asked questions. Neighbours very helpful"*
- *"Having been in previous fires, I am delighted to see the powers that be thinking of fires as a fact of life, rather than an occasional bit of bad luck."*
- *"Having town water would greatly improve our chances to protect our properties, if the electricity is cut off we have noway to defend our properties."*
- *"Hope this information is used to improve outcomes for all."*
- *"husband away most of the time so I was alone although he kept me up to date with the fires"*
- *"Husband returned home to get dogs, police helpful but firm to hurry up and leave. Thanks to all involved in keeping us safe."*
- *"I am conducting a PhD with the University of Sydney researching risk perception and natural hazards relating to fire, flood and heatwaves. I was very pleased to see that this questionnaire is constructed along very similar lines to my own research and I look forward to sharing results with UOW and CRC upon completion. I did not expect to be directly involved in the October bushfires but I was, and it has learnt an interesting insight into being both a researcher and a participant. If I may offer a small constructive criticism, most people would be reluctant to complete 97 questions - its a long survey. Yours sincerely Sarah English sarah.english@sydney.edu.au"*
- *"I am disappointed and overwhelmed by my experiences with the rfs in relation to being allowed to prepare for the fire seasons the years go by in a sustainable manner. My neighbors do no hazard reduction and I get palmed off when I ask the rfs to encourage my neighbors to clean up. one neighbor did not do any hazard reduction for 17 years prior to the last fire. My neighbors on both sides have not done any hazard reduction in the last 12 years. When I needed the rfs in 2001 it was all about them they refused to help me defend my family and assets and decamped at great haste. Then 3 weeks after the fire in 2001 one of the rfs members who ran away came back and tried to buy some timber off me. It was gone in the fire he refused to help defend from the fire. My local East Kurrajong brigade is really good they were not the ones who ran away in 2001. They were busy."*
- *"I am disturbed by the general level of complacency in my area. There is a widespread view that it won't happen here. Given my life experiences I assess this area as being at high risk on many days. I am frustrated by a lack of working hydrants, neighbours with nil property preparation, and the attitude that their place is insured, so what is the fuss. This is complicated by working families who take no time to prepare their properties for high / severe days, and by Council's failure to maintain an adequate level of street sweeping, so gutters are full of litter during spring/summer. Generally I think protection aspects of the fires mentioned were very well managed, and I learnt a huge amount just by following them in the media- unfortunately I don't feel that the community in general used them as a learning process."*
- *"I am proud to be a RFS Volunteer"*

- *"I had difficulty finding out who I should be informing about my safety and whereabouts. people were concerned about me and I ended up having to inform neighbours, RFS, Police and the evacuation centre individually, A centralized reporting and tracking centre, well advertised would be good. Also the tendency for the media to exaggerate in the name of a good story caused me quite a bit of stress once I had evacuated. The RFS and police were brilliant."*
- *"I have answered the questions honestly but without disrespect to those involved, our fire struck quickly and unexpectedly. Timely useful information was very difficult to obtain. Everything was after the event, the other issue for us was \"bushfire season\" had not really hit as yet so we were not as prepared as we would otherwise be. Preparation in the areas including back burning and power line maintenance of trees could be a good idea."*
- *"I hope that this survey assists in the future of planning for these massive fires. Too many people are complacent to the danger in their own backyards, and expect us as fire fighters to save their homes in the most dire of circumstances. Yes, we saved some homes, but we also saw some burn down. I don't want to see that again. My thanks to the commissioner for his support and kind words via the media. That meant a great deal to me. Good Luck"*
- *"I just found that the RFS website seemed to put information on there too late, as the updating at times took forever"*
- *"I left my husband stayed. We have poor signal here, and our power was lost. Our daughter in Melbourne kept us informed and the Fireies were amazing. They stayed with my husband and kept him well informed. They back burnt us to save us and multiple others neighbours, then when the weather changed and the spot fires came he managed with help from a couple of neighbours, then the Fireies returned when they realised we were in trouble. The choppers and fire cranes saved our home pets and my husband. The police that my husband dealt with were offensive abusive and condescending. By staying and following the RFS rules we still have our home. Longford 1 was our saviour. Police have their role but in this instance it was inappropriate."*
- *"I received text alerts in Hill Top for Balmoral and Bargo yet I know family in Bargo who didn't receive the text alerts. This system needs refining if possible."*
- *"I think more back nurning needs to be done every 2 years. Council, Sydney Catchment & National Parks need to clean up their act in this area, some places have never been cleaned or back burnt in this area for over 30 years."*
- *"I think you guys do an absolutely wonderful job!"*
- *"I want to say thank you to all Emergency Services Personnel. Blue Mountains Gazette staff also deserve a community award of sorts especially for their work on the day of the Winmalee fires"*
- *"I was not aware that we would lose all communications sources as a result of fires due to power lines being burnt down and smoke blocking mobile phone reception... People should be informed about this when choosing to stay on their properties.."*
- *"I was out in Robertson with my mother. The only warning i got was a call from my friend then directly after the call a sms. The sms said to evacuate. I did not receive another warnings. My animals were left outside and i wish i other more waning so i could have removed them to a safe place."*
- *"I was very happy with all the help and advice we received, my only complaint is not having mobile phone coverage in our area was a hinderance. Thanks to the RFS our house and property were saved, in fact the whole of Clarence was saved, we count ourselves very fortunate, the way in which the Police and RFS organised and worked together was amazing to watch, a very professional job indeed."*
- *"I wish to thank all the emergency services for their effort in responding to the unpredictable fire that occurred in Winmalee. They did an amazing job!"*
- *"I would like to see South Street, Medowie completely opened. Currently there is a section of approx 70m that is closed. This means that the evacuation of homes on Pacific dunes Golf Course is via Medowie road which is where the fire was threatening. Opening th final section of south street would increase options for traffic during an evacuation in future."*
- *"In regards to the SMS alert; my husband was away in Jindabyne yet still received one ..."*
- *"In the Blue Mountains, safety messages and fire warnings would have been much more successful if we had mobile phone coverage. When the land lines were jammed, no one in our street had any way to contact Emergency Services, family or friends. The lack of mobile phone coverage in our area is a significant risk factor during a bushfire."*
- *"In the initial questions I assumed you were asking about my situation immediately before the fire. If you were asking about my situation now then I may have not answered exactly right."*
- *"Information did not give notice. Threat to us minimal. Road closures at bargo freeway trapped car in fire path. Stupidity. Evacuation request was joke as danger past. Very poorly done. Best way still looking outside for smoke. Sad really."*
- *"Information of where to take animals came a bit late for us, we took the cats and dogs with us and bird, but didnt know where to take the other animals."*
- *"Information out to rural area away from villages did not happen including notice of public meeting"*

- *"It needs to be easier and quicker to do small burns to protect your own assets. Our Brigade would love to help do more small HR's in strategic places - good for the community and help with training of newer recruits."*
- *"IT was scary and stressfull, and we weren't directly impacted with flame--had embers and ash dropping for over a week. We made an informed decision to be as prepared as possible"*
- *"It would have been useful to know which direction the fire was going as in going towards X township. It was very confusing to work out whether we were under threat. The community meeting was the best source of information but I was looking for hourly updates before we decided to leave. It can be very scary to hear sirens wailing, be surrounded by smoke yet not know whether the fire was coming anywhere near. It is simply impractical to expect people to evacuate whole townships on days when a bushfire may or may not eventuate. I was lucky that I happen to be on leave at the time. I have no idea how I would have reacted had I been working."*
- *"Just a big thank you to all the volunteers!"*
- *"Just to reiterate the comments I made earlier. You keep talking about \"the fires\". The day the fire broke out was unexpected so my reaction was tempered by the fact I was at work, and the following week because of the danger and the fear I had felt the previous week being cut off from my home and my cats I took the week off work because conditions were predicted to be much worse, then my reactions were different. It would have been helpful if you could have had two sections in the questionnaire to address the day the fires broke out (no warning, most people away from homes at work) and a few days later when weather and wind conditions worsened and fires were well established, when behaviour was different because there was more room for choice and planning."*
- *"Just to say a Big Thank you to all the people who were involved and gave their time to help others in need. Thank You ALL."*
- *"Keep up the good work. Improve communication between RFS Hawkesbury, local brigades and Firewise Groups. More specific local info (eg on Facebook) would save a lot of panic and speculation."*
- *"Linkview fire threat was a week, not a single day as some questions assumed. Decisions were different on the first day when so unexpected, compared to the following days with much information and advice given by RFS and others. Fantastic info from RFS during this time \_ informative and well delivered."*
- *"listen to the locals and when we go away on task forces use us dont stand us down all the time"*
- *"Lived in the Blue Mountains for 41 years. Never knew so many people who have lost their houses personally. This was an absolute shocker of a fire."*
- *"Local brigade 'hill top' brilliant, facebookcommunication from firies brilliant"*
- *"Localised control is more acceptable to me than control from Homebush"*
- *"Love your work but we are an RFS family and better informed than most"*
- *"Love your work."*
- *"Me and my boyfriend were both at work when the fire broke out we lost fences on our property which was not prepared as we only moved in 9 days before hand"*
- *"More clarity on what action you should take - \"Watch and Act\" - means what -do you watch or do you act? The info on the RFS website about making a bushfire plan was also fairly vague - know what your trigger is to leave - some advice as to what this could be for your area would be useful. It is inconvenient to leave if not necessary but with young children in the house we are not prepared to take risks. We were probably not aware of how in danger we were until after the fire had passed (very little info available at the time, although we do appreciate that it all happened so quickly). It was when we saw our friends updates on facebook and knew how close it had come. I also now know that if the riot squad drives past, it is probably a good time to go! Having said all this, we still believe the RFS did a brilliant job in exceptionally difficult circumstances."*
- *"More localised TV updates would of been good. Community meetings were held were they couldn't accommodate numbers - so we missed out."*
- *"My area is not considered a fire-prone area, yet we live just across the road from National Park bushland. In October the fires came within a few kms yet we were unprepared. We had not been encouraged to have a fire-safety plan and the local council had not sent us any information to this regard. On the day when the fires came the closest I received an SMS as well as a telephone call which said (via a recorded message) that there was fire in the area and \"take cover as the fire approaches\". I did not know what 'take cover' meant, i.e. did it mean I had sufficient time to leave or should I just stay in the house and potentially let the fire pass over? Because I had my baby with me I gathered a few things and left the area. As it turns out, the fire w3as not in the area but the message went to all phones in that telephone reception area. In the future I would appreciate more assistance and preparation information from local/state government. It would also be useful if the telephone emergency warnings could be more localised and more specific in terms of advice/directions."*
- *"My Experience is mainly of the fires in 2000 that actually came onto our property. I found I became very anxious during the recent fires as they were close enough to flare up and travel from Bilpin on one side and*

up the Putty Road from the other. I removed valuables from the house and my partner has set up water tanks , pumps and hoses that I can use if he's not home."

- *"My house is a number of kilometres from the fireground, but I think the local Catholic Schools panicked when they closed for a day in the southern highlands, as the fire was not even close to any of them. The private school where I work had some students and families affected which we supported, but we stayed open as we are located in Bowral."*
- *"My mobile is registered to our business in Parramatta and even though I was home in Winmalee I did not receive any specific warnings nor did one come on my home phone. I knew the fire was close by but did not have any clear information as to whether I should evacuate or stay. I was worried that Hawkesbury rd would be blocked and that I would be stuck trying to evacuate. I evacuated 30 minutes after being informed about the fires from my son's text from St Columbas."*
- *"My parents lost their home. They are now living with us while they work to rebuild or buy a new house as a result. Just mentioning in case it is relevant."*
- *"My situation was unique so hard to address some questions accurately."*
- *"Needed more information after/during the event. Perhaps a number to call to find out if property had been lost. The main stress we experienced, once family was all accounted for, was not knowing what - if anything - was left."*
- *"No"*
- *"no - but thanks to the rfs for being there."*
- *"no but keep up the good work go Bargo"*
- *"No."*
- *"No. Thanks"*
- *"notice was very late in day when fire was imminent threat . If planning is to encourage a leave early - then need early warnings of fires in area by text to mobile please ? both away form home working in most days - need time to take any action if fire activity occurs . neither of us knew there was a fire in the area until text message / and road closure - which was too late As I was in Vic - hearing news of Wyong fire - was then hard to find exactly where the Wyong fire was in relationship to our property . . Then in following days TV and radio announcements were alarmist for the NSW context . Esp damaged the tourism in Blue Mountains which is still suffering the second disaster of no visitors / economic hardship results"*
- *"Now that was way way to long to get accurate information from ppl. Any numbers on those that failed to complete to survey? RFS Twitter needs to be monitored regularly and more user friendly..... RFS emergency Warning should never change URL - important information was lost due constant changing of URL"*
- *"On initial, day of fire was out of area and received no SMS warning but 'take shelter' warning found on ansaphone shortly after returning. I might not have returned home if I had had an SMS combined with visual cues of helicopters /sirens/smoke etc. Ansaphone message was too early given my actual property location- but I would rather have had this than not. The 'as bad as it gets' TV briefing /advice to leave on the Wed after the start of the fire, when weather conditions were bad were the final straw and triggered us to leave after 5 days of smoke and helicopters overhead. My one overall improvement I would hope for is to make advice and websites as localised as possible, taking in your individual fire risk. Having read of other people's experiences who have lost homes I think money spent on fire defences is very hit and miss in it's effectiveness and perhaps money is best spent on upgrading insurance!?"*
- *"One issue for us at Yanderra impacted by the Halls Road Fire was that it coincided with the fire in the Blue Mountains, so most media coverage related to that fire. Information was not local enough after the initial impact so it was impossible to know where the fire was impacting locally in the subsequent days because it was travelling over a wide area. Phone call to the RFS info line did not clarify the local area impacted. The most local information was on the local community facebook page with postings from a local resident Rural Fire Service volunteer. However the firefighting response from the various fire services was absolutely amazing. In my area some of received text messages and some did not. I received the initial emergency alert for which I was very grateful but then none after that. Others received subsequent alerts."*
- *"Only thanks to the RFS, community, and all the help we received"*
- *"Our fire volunteers are true heros"*
- *"Our home was probably too far away from the fire for most of this survey to be applicable."*
- *"Our local RFS facebook page was our best source of timely, local information."*
- *"Our local RFS were totally and absolutely amazing during both the local September and October fires"*
- *"Our response on the first day of the fires had to be very rapid due to the speed of events. On the first day I simply could not reach my mother-in-law, who was extremely frail with terminal cancer but still at her home, due to traffic congestion and the fire danger in the area which was very distressing. We had a more considered, and slightly different approach later in the week and were able to take her with us when advised to leave the second time. We are so grateful to the the RFS and all who assisted in fighting the fires. Filling out this survey has brought a lot of memories back and been quite emotional."*

- *"Our RFS are heroes!!!!"*
- *"our street was covered in thick smoke before we seen a cop, cops didn't come to our door, but we spoke to one outside 10 mins before we evacuated, we filled car with blankets, cloathes, photos, no info on evectuoin centres, we just went to bargo, no info for hours, we then recieved evacuation sms, lots and lots of them, the reports were about 1 hour behind, we know cos we went back to our town and the fire was passed, we went for a drive to see if we were allowed back in town, while in our street radio said our whole street and school and cobham were on fire, after fire had allready gone. a friend of mine lives in wellers rd bargo recieved a sms from RFS said her street was on fire, looked outside her house, went for a drive, there was no fire."*
- *"Our town does not have town water and found that tank water and water truck to be a slow way of helping in a fire. We also heard very little about our fire on the TV."*
- *"Perhaps have more consideration to the number of volunteers involved in the fires and there actions and responses will be different to 'Jo blogs'"*
- *"Phone warnings too late due to system jammed. No power for three to four days. No gas for a week. Police asked us to leave after fire front had passed. Fire appliances arrived 45min after fire had passed."*
- *"Police were understanding, SES were excellent, an out of area Groupie was alarmist and panicking and was the only direct RFS contact for those left that had a plan and decided to stay. He in fact had the nerve to say he could enforce evacuation even though a state of emergency had not been declared. Didn't install any confidence in the RFS for me, particularly being an ex serving member."*
- *"Property wasn't directly affected, but both adults were involved through support services at the Fire Control Centre"*
- *"R F S do a great job for the community"*
- *"RE the previous question, the Commissioner did a truly WONDERFUL job of providing updates (every half hour, was it - a herioc effort). But as far as \"accurate, timely, relevant\", how would we know? We have to take the information as it is given to us; we have no way of judging its accuracy, timeliness or relevance."*
- *"Relieved very little emergency warning. Everything was fine one minute, and the next everything was alight with zero warning."*
- *"Residents in the area from Woodford to Medlow Bath were told to evacuate when there were no fires in the immediate areas. Panic information given by the \"street protectors\". Community Fire People"*
- *"RFS Commissioner and volunteers did an amazing job with no loss of life. The frie swept through Winmalee so fast and with very little warning, it was difficult to be prepared, on a working / school day."*
- *"RFS did an awesome job saving our town and homes. Very appreciated"*
- *"RFS is alarmist, trying to force evacuations which confuse people when they can't unless it is deemed sect 44. People save houses and houses save people if prepared. It is a shame that we are being dumbed down or at least playing to the lowest denominator."*
- *"RFS should be paid to fight fire as they leave their workplaces to defend their communities"*
- *"RFS should be proud of their efforts."*
- *"RFS were wonderful during the fires"*
- *"RFS/SES were absolutely amazing - very grateful for them. RAFT teams particularly amazing! My husband received text msg's and I didn't - unsure why. Community meeting was really great - got lots of relevant local specific info and survival tips. Came to the meeting a little unsure about the level of threat etc but left with a much clearer idea of how to proceed. If I hadn't found the BM Firewatch Facebook I would have felt pretty ill-informed about what was going on at any given time. After this and Mt Vic/Shipleby RFS Facebooks, ABC News 24 was probably the most useful source of info. Have to say we didn't find the bushfire survival plan overly helpful."*
- *"SAME OLD STORY, NOT ENOUGH \"PRACTICAL\" LOCAL KNOWLEDGE GOES INTO HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND REDUCTION. THE 'LOCAL ' BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE SYSTEM IS FAR TOO WEIGHTED TOWARDS THOSE ORGANISATIONS WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF SELF INTEREST AND BOOK QUALIFICATIONS AND VERY LITTLE PRACTICAL OR LOCAL EXPERIENCE."*
- *"School closures and the decisions were left too late."*
- *"Several locals lost houses they were defending when the plastic parts inside their water meter melted. Should not be legal to install these in BF areas."*
- *"Shane the RFS dude on TV should get some sort of Australian of the year award. The local RFS volunteers were incredibly helpful, both at the community meeting and in our local streets, keeping us informed and helping us make sensible decisions about what to do. The whole RFS should be thanked wholeheartedly for not playing with our lives. We would rather leave and live than risk dying. Anyone who tells you they wouldn't leave next time is a moron. We've already jumped out of a bedroom window when our house was burning down - stuff really can be replaced. Thank you for keeping us safe <3"*



- *"SMS alerts no good for many of us in Winmalee as mobile coverage is appalling. One of the questions asked about where you were at the time the fire started. There was no provision to say you were not at home because it was a work day and the fire came pretty much out of the blue - Winmalee Linksvie fire"*
- *"SMS arrived late,"*
- *"SMS warnings were sent 1/2 an hour AFTER the fire impacted the street. RFS website was only displaying a watch and act status even AFTER houses had already been impacted by the fires. Had either of these been provided in a more timely manner, many people would have had more time to either prepare or evacuate. Between noticing a fire in my area and seeing flames in my street was a mere 7 minutes."*
- *"Sold our house in the months after the fire. had been intending to sell in May but fire experience hastened the decision. We believe that in our area the fire hazard has increased dramatically in past few years and many people are not aware/willing to prepare properties appropriately which thus impacts our property. Can recover from loss of property at 65 but at 75 may be more difficult. Plus husband is from Bondi and 2 major fires in 10 years is enough for him. I am from country and have previously experienced fires so not as agitated."*
- *"Some 'Yes, No' questions really needed a NA option"*
- *"Some of the media by the rfs commissioner were unnecessarily alarmist"*
- *"Some of the telephone warnings arrived too late, the RFS website appeared to crash or not updating and I was unaware of the Linksvie Fire until hours later."*
- *"Some of these questions were difficult to answer because there wasn't an answer for us firefighters."*
- *"some of your questions did not let me answer properly , we had two fires in winmalee in a space of a few weeks and you were questions we only set for one fire"*
- *"Spent most of my time organising the brigade's preparedness for response and deployment."*
- *"Stay and protect. Not abandonment !!!! as so many did between the Thursday devastation and the following Wednesday. Just use this time a gift anyway is time to clean prepare and protect what is ours to protect...otherwise don't live here."*
- *"stop allowing stupid tv stations in to the frontline. They only report on sensational events and provide little to no useful information to residents involved in the bushfire emergency."*
- *"suggest prior knowledge for all residents of safe place more prominently made known. Would like a fire warden in each small community area to warn and liaise with RFS, especially such as ours with only one road out."*
- *"suggest the state government and local council prepare for bushfires"*
- *"Survey was a bit unclear, the fire emergency was for a couple of days, we were really affected on the first day also survey didn't ask was one person at home and what did they do"*
- *"Survey is inadequate and biased towards the standing of RFS as perceived by its members and government support."*
- *"Television briefings were focused on blue mountains and not my local area"*
- *"Thank you"*
- *"Thank you all for saving our homes & our town!"*
- *"Thank You Fire men & women!!!!"*
- *"Thank you for a good job. Well done!"*
- *"Thank you for being there when we needed you!"*
- *"Thank you for conducting this survey. I look forward to further improvements in Bushfire Safety Procedures. John Stanley, Wentworth Falls R. F. B."*
- *"Thank you for saving our town. <3"*
- *"Thank you to ALL involved, RFS, police, volunteers and local community. You are ALL amazing."*
- *"Thank you to all of our volunteers"*
- *"Thank you to Firies. The Blue Mtns Bush Fire Recovery Team was essential."*
- *"Thank you to the Fire Fighters for saving our home!!!!!!"*
- *"Thank you to the RFS"*
- *"Thank you to the RFS for protecting us"*
- *"Thank you to the RFS."*
- *"Thank you!"*
- *"Thanks everyone's help! x"*
- *"Thanks to everyone who helped our community!"*

- "Thanks to the firies for all they did, they saved our town, it could have been so much worse for us. People complained about the evacuation and roadblocks but i found the police and firies to have done the best thing they were working with information we didn't have and I think they made the right decisions. when you consider we have no neighbourhood safe place in town, our town power lines were in the fire path and we are on tank water, therefore dependant on the power. It all happened so quickly. Some information at the oval at Bargo would have been helpful as to what was to be expected over the coming hours but thats hard too, not everyone went there anyway. the SMS we recieved was great but wasn't really clear in terms of where the fire was coming from and whether this was a mandatory evacuation or just advisable. When you are already stressed its hard to know the difference from the language of the SMS. Maybe you should have sent a follow up to give more information ie direction of fire and expected impact time to help people make decisions, getting that first one is scary when you are already looking at billowing smoke and realising its headed straight for you and its big and as the school parents we were being called to pick up their kids. URGENTLY i had already chekced the fires near me app and it had said fire was 8km away and under control (apparently app wasn't updating and i didn't go to fullwebsite at that time thats what i was told). having just had the school call to say it was being evacuated rapidly meant we were already stressed and trying to get to our kids as well as make decisions about leaving or staying. the community meeting was a great idea but maybe some more info on why the school was left closed and the decision making in that process would have been helpful. The SMS sent to shelter in place in bargo was a bit too nonspecific as Bargo is large and divided by the train line. I was there at an elderly relatives place and in view of that sms and the volume of traffic I had already seen, decided to relocate form there also with the elderly relatives and small children to avoid doing so later with even more traffic. I think the firies and the police welcome back to school for our kids a week later was PERFECT, it reduced the stress so much we were so grateful"*
- "Thanks to the RFS and all emergency services. You are our local heroes."*
- "Thanku rfs"*
- "Thankyou"*
- "That was a long survey. Too long. I suspect many who start the survey may not finish it."*
- "The category \"Other\" should be more available for anecdotal experiences. Thank you."*
- "The day the fires broke out, there was a HUGE amount of confusion as to what was actually going on. We had no electricity due to a tree falling on lines so it was difficult as therefore scary to find info."*
- "The fire moved so quickly and threatened our area before the Fires Near Me app registered it. We had heard sirens 15 minutes prior to smelling smoke but it turns out that truck was on its way to another fire in the region. This meant we were at a slightly higher level of alertness re: fires. That said, there was 12 minutes from us smelling and seeing the smoke until it was burning in our street so any warning systems would not have been in place within that time. One adult did a quick drive down to the end of the road to gauge the imminent to our family while the other started to pack the car and prepare the child and dog. On return from the end of the road the street was already covered in smoke and the orange glow of fire so it was a case of grab our family, pets and essentials and get out (which we had practised two weeks earlier). The only thing we would change for next time is send one of the adults over to knock on our elderly neighbour's door and insist she come with us instead of calling her as we packed and left. Obviously if there was more time we'd turn on the fire fighter pumps and more sprinklers and lay towels around the doors and windows. We'd also offer to take any of the other kids in the street to a safe area if their parents chose to stay. The community spirit within our street has only strengthened after the fires. We're all talking and looking out for each other a little more now - it's almost impossible to walk down the street without stopping for a chat at someone's house. The Port Stephens mayor's fund money has not yet been distributed to those affected by the fires. It should have be provided in a timely manner and when it was really needed. Yes, the clean up is ongoing and the insurance companies are dragging everything out with many in our street still waiting for sheds etc to be demolished and rebuild, fences, including pool fences, to be rebuilt etc. Everyone in our street will get there eventually but its frustrating that everything is taking so long. We have a long way to go on to get our property and outer buildings to a level they were before the fire but we'll get there - life and family are far more important than property. A huge thank you needs to go to the firefighters who laid their lives on the line for our community. I have the upmost respect for them and their families."*
- "The fire was, as the crow flies, very close, although our area was not impacted by flames, a wind change would have changed that and I felt as threatened as if the fire had been in our immediate locality."*
- "The Linksview fire fire started with no warnings. The previous fires through Hawkesbury Heights a few weeks before made us prepare our property by getting the gutters cleared and our hoses and sprinklers ready. It was only through good fortune that our son was home on the day and had hoses and sprinklers on. He was also able to operate on our property and our neighbours who were not home. Even though the gutters had been cleared/ the embers still got into the garage roof through the coping. He had the foresight to get onto the roof and remove the coping and using an extinguisher we had in the kitchen for over 20 years to put out the burning embers that were sitting on top of the main roof beams. By that time the water pressure was to low for hoses to work, thank goodness the old extinguisher still worked or else we would not have our home. The other comment I would make is that during the recovery process people like us who could still return to live in our home, we still had burned out garden sheds and all their contents. shade houses and plants/ gardens but received absolutely no assistance in the clean up process. We are still living in the burnt out areas with all of the cleanup taking place with all the noise, plant and equipment and will then have to live through all of the*

rebuilding process over the next few years. As we are still able to live in our house no one seems to be concerned about us - i.e. we are ok what's your problem"

- *"The longterm effects of media reporting of the fires is almost more devastating than the fires themselves. The media must curb their hype, maps and information before each and every media broadcast to say exactly what areas are and are NOT affected by the fires. Immediate blanket coverage after a fire to show clearly where was and was not burnt. The media have a lot to answer for in the blue Mountains"*
- *"The main direct risk for our property was the first thursday. (after that it was really only the unpredictability of arson) My experiences of that day made me aware of the real danger from mob panic. in the following week I became more concerned about the latent hysteria in the greater region than i was by the fires, especially due to the ongoing construction site that is the GWH, consequently made most subsequent decisions based on the risk of being isolated from home (as I work in the upper mts) due to either panic congestion, road accident or physical threat to highway by fire. I have a professional interest in bushfire and have a strong network of contacts (fire ecologists, RFS volunteers, NPWS, BMCC folk etc ) that were invaluable in personally assessing risks and my actions."*
- *"The only problem was panicking police given the power to evacuate. They were rude, had no knowledge of fires and generally totally unhelpful, boarding on sheer bullies. They totally ignored the advice of RFS regarding staying to defend. The RFS were as usual magificent, pity about the police."*
- *"The reason there was only one at home on the day is the kids were at school and I was down at the Linksvie fire with the RFS."*
- *"The recent bushfire triggered anxiety with myself and my 15 yo daughter due to bushfires we were in at Ayers Rock in 2003. Both of us are having counselling at the moment."*
- *"The resources applied initially was impressive but ongoing management of the fires locally was at times poorly relaid to those who were actively continuing fire containment in my area."*
- *"The RFS are incredible. Other emergency services worked well together. The recovery process has been difficult due to politics."*
- *"The RFS hierachy is an industry which needs big fires to sustain its empire. Volunteers are played for suckers. My book "White Overall Days" tells the true story. We must get burnoff powers back to the local captains. The current structure guarantees bigger future firestorms. 49824095 will put you in contact with me and I'll enlighten you."*
- *"The SMS warnings were too late, as the fire was already upon the road. The police closed the road and as we were all at work/ school we could not get through in time to collect animals."*
- *"The survey seemed to assume my home was under genuine threat from the fires, despite my answers indicating that it never was. Our family did make the decision to leave "just in case" and because my child's school was closed (twice, in fact, having been re-opened in between). I received no SMS warnings at all, though all my family and neighbours did. My mobile phone number is correctly registered at my home address."*
- *"The text message sent out during the Salt Ash fire was not received by members in the affected area, yet fire fighters on the fire front were receiving them. Although other people in the same area as other public received it. Thank you guys for all your work and to the Commissioner for all his hard work. Us fire fighters appreciate the support and information :)"*
- *"The threat of the fires joining seemed unlikely and out of proportion to the damage done economically to the tourism industry. There needs to be a more careful to dealing with threats in areas that rely on trourism. Too many people still suffering loss of income from this event."*
- *"the warnings for our area came too late for the time we needed to evacuate. The fire started very close to us as a result of a thrown cigarette butt and the ferocity of the winds meant it moved very fast. this meant information wasn't able to updated as quickly as we needed. we got a warning on our landline but it came after we had evacuated. We didn't get a text message. we don't have mobile reception."*
- *"There wasn't any consultation between brigade captain and Police. Police evacuated my household even though the brigade captain said there was no need. Evacuation centre in Lithgow had no information about Bell and Tom Shirt who called the meeting didn't even turn up for the first meeting so a second meeting had to be scheduled. Police media did what they could but the information they had was 24 hours old."*
- *"This fire came up so fast that there was probably nothing anyone could have done to adequately warn us. By the time we got the first SMS that there was even a fire in the area we were already trapped and facing the flames and thinking we were going to die. Additionally, even the weather warnings were inadequate because the weather changed so quickly, again not anything anyone could have predicted. I think everyone did their best except the bloody power company whose known faulty wires started the fire. Thank you Fireys!"*
- *"this survey is disorganised it needs to be sub divided int direct impact and other ."*
- *"too much of the tv emphasis was on Blue Mountains, not enough local coverage. I didn't know what watch and act meant when i got sms alert. i do now because I looked it up"*
- *"txt message warning system needs to be a better service. I received warnings 3 days after the fire. When I questioned this firstly thru my local RFS they told me it must be because my phone must not be registered to*

*an address in the local area. The same mobile number has been registered to the same address for 20 years. told to contact service provider which I did and started receiving warnings."*

- "unfortunately the coverage was limited on TV"*
- "Very pleased that the NSW RFS and associated services are there! Many thanks for all your efforts."*
- "Want to Thank the fire fighters for saving our property.. Our street was very lucky."*
- "Was very disappointed that there was nothing setup at Blackheath and that Springwood was not accessible if you had animals. Thanks for letting us participate in this survey"*
- "We aren't fit enough to be useful during an emergency, so we go to family in another district."*
- "We got some news from our daughters who were getting it from Facebook, radio and TV. So we had plenty of ways to get info plus RFS people came to our door."*
- "We had conflicting information about clean-ups. Finally it transpired that there would be no official help for anybody unless total loss of home. Damage to home and property was not considered of any consequence. After being told on several occasions that registering damage made us eligible for assistance in clean up, we learned we had to do it all ourselves. Bushfire recovery team were all talk, no action."*
- "We have had to evacuate twice in the past 20 years. But we have 3 massive Grey Gums in a neighbour's yard that considerably overhang our house. I have learned that if fires come our way NOTHING will save my home. I need the Government to change the law allowing us to be able to remove/ trim trees that overhang the homes - especially if they are not your trees, this neighbour refuses to allow anything to be done with these trees. I have prepared all that I can, her trees totally infringe my property. All I can do is keep full building insurance paid up to date and prepare to leave early if fire threatens."*
- "We have no tv, poor radio and internet connections, especially in poor weather conditions. We called 000 about 5 times in a month due to Parks and Wildlife starting fires - need an easier way of reporting problems."*
- "We received a lot more information than in previous years, and our local men and women did a tireless job."*
- "We received our first text message warning us about the fire, 28 mins after we had fled our burning street. Unacceptable. Also we had in way of knowing if our sons school was under any threat as we could not get any information."*
- "We rely to much on technology ie the rfs website crashed if you could access the net 3g network could not cope with traffic at times making it hard to call friends and family and to access information, sometimes the information was not updated or accurate enough (I do not blame the rfs as I know you are busy) the press only report homes on fire so if you do not see your home or street you can only guess that you are safe ( one rfs fire map showed my house should of been lost)"*
- "We should have some community fire units in our street."*
- "Well done to all at RFS"*
- "Well done to all the fire crew, staff and volunteers in place during that time."*
- "When fire happens as quick as it did on 17th Oct 2013 (Linksvie Rd) in the weather conditions on that day it is inevitable that chaos will be the result. I have the utmost respect for the RFS and Springwood Fire crews who tried so hard to fight that blaze."*
- "When there are several major fires in the state happening all at once like Red October 2013, please remember that there are people living and moving in areas outside of the sydney/blue mountain areas who need to have relevant up to date and specific timely information so that they can make rational life saving decisions for themselves and their families."*
- "While the message on the home phone was useful, I would have liked to know that I could be contacted by mobile if I had to move out or the power went out (making home phone unusable).. Having moved, I still get alerts for the Illawarra, but nothing local in Port Stephens. Is there a way to register a number for future alerts? If not it would be a good idea because lots of people move around for work etc. Registering your mobile number for alerts."*
- "Whilst the local RFS and NSW Fire and Rescue Units were fantastic as were the local Police BUT the RFS community meeting at Mt Vic was alarmist not helpful, it took more than 90 minutes before the speaker actually spoke about the bushfire at Mt Vic, he was late, rude and disorganised - no way to run a public meeting. The RFS head office and the local HQ were totally useless, in fact more destructive with their alarmist messages and out of date facts, the local RFS via Facebook was the only reliable source of information we had. Something needs to be done about this, it was very traumatic for me and my family, to think that the RFS Commissioner and all the resources of the RFS were no good compared to local RFS volunteers & NSW Fire & Rescue on the ground when it came to communicating and reassuring us. The RFS Commissioner should be SACKED! As should the Blue Mountains RFS Community / Education Officer (I think his name is Paul) because he is an arrogant fool who did nothing but scare the hell out of local people unnecessarily, my neighbours were reduced to tears by his ranting crap!"*
- "With no power from 11am on 19th to the following Monday you are totally isolated - no TV, no mobile, no land line, no internet. Need to rethink communication strategies - I learnt more from my husband who was away in Port Macquarie and had access to TV etc than I did from being on my won at home!"*

- *"With only 20mins to react, before fire hit & only 1 x person, not enough time to carry out fire plan"*
- *"Wollondilly and wingicarrabee districts handled this fire extremely poorly I have never seen such a disgrace by the RFS they weren't even following their own SOP'S it was just a joke and if it wasn't for us firefighters knowing what to do we would have lost more property because the RFS staff were just a joke. if u wanna know more come see our station at yanderra we will tell you everything"*
- *"Wondering why all the local fire brigade were sent to other areas, and we did not have enough services left to help defend our properties. People that eventually came were getting names of streets confused eg. confusing Muru with Moray. When residents and police were trying to get RFS to come and help. No one came until after 9 houses had all gone up in flames. 'By the time my husband got to the street, it was as though the whole street was on fire, and no one was there."*
- *"Would like to receive text messages with fire alerts."*
- *"Y'all do a fantastic job!!"*
- *"YES I DO I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE RFS FOR THE LITHGOW FIRES I WORK IN REAL ESTATE IN THIS TOWN AND MANY OF OUR TENANTS WERE EVACUATED AND THE RFS AND POLICE WERE AWESOME ... WELL DONE LADIES AND GENTS"*
- *"Yes, I have lived here at Yerrinbool for the past 16+ yrs, moved here from Mittagong my son joined the RFS. The BUSH burns at Yerrinbool as it does in many areas all round Australia, I have lived and grown up in other bushfire areas. Live in these areas get your buildings fire retardant."*
- *"Yes. Was unclear where the fire fronts were. The maps show the fire boundaries but not where the fires are burning. Please make this information readily available next time. Incl distn of heat maps."*
- *"You didn't provide enough information on our local area. I KNOW SYDNEY IS SOOOOOOOO MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR LITTLE Townships but.... gossip between myself and at least 40 odd people from our local area all agreed you didn't provide enough information about our local area! It was all about Springwood! THE ONLY WAY WE FOUND OUT THAT THE FIRES HAD STOPPED WAS BY AERIAL PHOTO POSTED ON THE NET 2 DAYS AFTER THE FIRE WENT OUT!! Springwood this and Springwood that blah blah blah We were in Sydney for a week! AND NO ONE BOTHERED TO TELL US IT WAS SAFE TO GO HOME!! FUCKING JOKE! WE WERE ADVISED TO LEAVE...AND WHEN WE DID WE GOT BUGGER ALL INFORMATION!! NEXT TIME WE ARE NOT LEAVING UNLESS WE SEE ACTUAL FLAMES AND SMOKE AT THE END OF OUR STREET!"*
- *"Your questions are not that applicable to the Springwood fire. It started without warning on Thursday - I left work and came home but had to walk the last few km - and it threatened our house on Friday. We packed straightaway and left Friday morning, but the RFS arrived before the fire did, so we returned. The RFS dealt with the fire and the immediate threat passed. However, the area remained under threat for several days, and we remained packed ready to leave. On the Wednesday, we went to the evacuation centre as advised, but in hindsight that was unnecessary with Shane Fitzsimmons (RFS) being perhaps a bit alarmist and certainly contradictory to local RFS advice. Beforehand, we had prepared around the house and garden, but it was not enough! The forthcoming 10/50 rule will help. The most useful thing would have been real time data - where is the fire(s) NOW and what is the local RFS advising and intending to do. They were nearby, but they could not tell us when / if they would defend our property. They then just turned up....thankfully!"*