

**Submission Text:** I spent about 20 years with the local [REDACTED] CFA from 1990. During that time, I undertook much training and gained experience with firefighting equipment, which led me to install a dual sprinkler system, on the house and around the house. For 35 years or so I've maintained this equipment, tested every year. Never used in anger as they say, but one day it could be vital. Pumps and water tanks aren't particularly expensive compared to insurance premiums, but not many people know how to use them because it's the CFA's job normally to do that role. This needs to change, and urgently and I have referred to ways this could be done in my submission file "Discussion re CFA policy reform1.doc".

One wonders how many houses could be saved every year and how many people would not be homeless now if they had access to the knowledge and support to have such systems and know how to use them! Instead they are urged to abandon their family homes by the very agency that is tasked with protecting them!

It seems a common experience across Australia that the resources of the various fire-fighting agencies are using a model that is not suitable for the change in fire fighting conditions, which is a model of a mobile force that chases fires which 'randomly' occur under extreme conditions, and there is a lot of uncertainty about the causes of a lot of these fires.

Towns and localities have no local firefighting infrastructure to protect community assets, instead relying on ad hoc arrangements on the day. There is no support for individuals to protect their homes whether they have equipment or not. There are no real safe areas, the so-called Places of Last Resort which are not protected or supported in any meaningful way. In summary, they are a sick joke and a cop-out for government agencies to avoid any responsibility for them.

If we accept that fire conditions have changed and have become more extreme, then very little is being done about facing the challenge so thank you for setting up this inquiry.

I do not believe the CFA has the resources or the ambition to deal with extreme weather conditions, and so often we hear the Retreat and Abandon message which always results in lost houses and infrastructure. It certainly isn't the fault of the volunteer firefighters, they do their best with the equipment they have and the leadership they are under.

If this is how we are dealing with extreme weather conditions then a lot more Australians are going to be homeless in their own country because we are not adapting to the

conditions. We can't maintain enough volunteers for the bad days, there will never be enough, and they are not usefully employed for the rest of the time if there were more, so what is the answer?

In my view, the answer is that every town, every locality should have a genuine safe, defended space which is selected by the local community and maintained by the local community. The CFA would be in a support role with technical advice and training but it would not oversee the operations on an extreme day, it would just do what it does now, a reactive mobile force that chases fires.

This area would also deal with animals etc. The local community would also be encouraged to develop systems for people to protect their houses with the tech support and training from the Local Brigades, and particularly for brigade members so they have a home to come back to, unlike what has happened this year in Harcourt and other places. If systems are properly installed, then those systems should be registered as capable and those property owners should not be forced from their homes by those agencies tasked with protecting who are in retreat-mode!

I have outlined some general guidelines re this in my submission file also.