



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



Ms Belinda Clarkson
Secretary
Firestick Estate Inc.
4 Felicia Rise
DIAMOND CREEK VIC 3089

Our reference: HQ16/0300

7 June 2016

Dear Ms Clarkson

Thank you for letter to the NSW Premier, the Hon. Mike Baird MP regarding bush fires in Australia. The Premier has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) believes that national consistency and coordination is very important in the preparation of procedures for bush fire spread forecasts and provision of bush fire emergency warnings.

The NSW RFS actively participates in national processes to improve coordination and consistency including the recently completed *Standardisation of Bureau of Meteorology Hazard Services Taskforce*, and the *Predictive Services Group* as part of the *Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council*.

Predictions for fires in NSW are prepared using both manual and computer modelling, which is based on national best practice fire behaviour science. These predications are undertaken by trained Fire Behaviour Analysts.

There are also a raft of procedures and policies which are prepared in consultation with nationally recognised experts using the best available science and data. These take into account factors such as weather, fuels and topography, as well as different spread mechanisms such as frontal spread and spotting. For example for every 10 degree slope, fires will double its speed. This means, if a fire is travelling at 5 kilometres per hour along flat ground and it hits a 10 degree slope, it will double in speed to 10 kilometres per hour up the hill. This, along with variances in fuel loads and prevailing weather makes it impossible to give an actual official maximum speed.

An example of how quickly fires can travel was seen in 2013, where the State Mine Fire in Lithgow travelled some 30 kilometres in one afternoon under very strong hot and dry winds.

As such, the more relevant information for communities is to consider the warning level applicable to the fire in question. Decisions in assigning warning levels to fires are based on a number of factors in addition to the fire spread itself. These factors include considerations such as proximity to communities, available suppression resources, road networks and threats to vulnerable people or assets.

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You may be assured that the NSW RFS takes the protection life, property and the environment extremely seriously.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a horizontal line.

Rob Rogers AFSM
Deputy Commissioner
Executive Director Operations