

*'We're not as safe as we thought'*

2018 Impact Evaluation of  
*Fire Stories – Living with Risk*



Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute





The documentary film *FIRE STORIES—LIVING WITH RISK* was released in August 2018 by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute. In the film, residents described their experience of the catastrophic 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains and reflected on the impact of the fires and the process of recovery.

This Impact Evaluation examines how viewing the film impacted audiences attending launch events in August and September 2018.

The film was auspiced by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and directed by Laura Zusters. It was made possible by the generous assistance of the NSW Rural Fire Service Bushfire Mitigation Fund, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Office of Environment and Heritage Blue Mountains Region, Blue Mountains City Council, the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub, and the Blue Mountains Gazette.

This film follows the release in June 2013 of the first film in the Fire Stories series, *FIRE STORIES—A LESSON IN TIME* in which residents described their experience of the devastating 1957 bushfires in the upper Blue Mountains and reflected on what they learnt from that experience. The Impact Evaluation Report is available at [fire.bmwhi.org.au](http://fire.bmwhi.org.au).

## DISCLAIMER

The information in this report is based on analysis of a survey and within a specific context. The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and its contractors and volunteers do not accept responsibility for any action taken, or interpretations arising from the findings.

Impact Evaluation undertaken by Anne Fitzgerald. To arrange permission to reproduce or use any part of this report please contact

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## Acronyms

BM	Blue Mountains
BMCC	Blue Mountains City Council
BMWHI	Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute
FS1	<i>Fire Stories-A Lesson in Time</i>
FS2	<i>Fire Stories-Living With Risk</i>
LGA	Local Government Area
NPWS	National Parks & Wildlife Service
NSW	New South Wales
RFS	Rural Fire Service



## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal custodians of the Blue Mountains. The *Fire Stories* project and this *2018 Impact Evaluation* have been conducted across Darug and Gundungurra land.

We sincerely thank each of the participants who have completed the surveys for their time and commitment; your help has made possible this analysis of the film's effectiveness in bushfire risk communication. Reflecting and planning in relation to bushfires raises thoughts and feelings that many would rather leave alone. The effort and care taken by survey respondents is evident in the many detailed comments. This research would not have been possible without the substantial input of 229 people who undertook Pre-viewing Survey, and the 89 who also completed the Post-viewing surveys. Your responses have provided a rich source of learning.

*Fire Stories-Living With Risk* features the accounts of people who were affected by the 2013 fires in Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Springwood – in particular, stories from eight households, the Rainbow Preschool Winmalee, and a local emergency services workers and recovery volunteers. The Fire Stories team is grateful for the generosity and courage of those who were approached and were able to share their insights.

The team acknowledges that the impact of the 2013 fires was devastating and affected many people and communities; many individuals, services, and businesses contributed to the fight to save lives and property and to the extraordinary immediate and ongoing recovery effort. We regret that stories from others, and from other locations affected by the fires, could not be included in the film. We appreciate the feedback received and acknowledge that important stories of other people and communities were regrettably not able to be included in the film.

*Fire Stories – Living With Risk* was auspiced and produced by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and directed by Laura Zusters. It was made possible by the generous assistance of the NSW Rural Fire Service-Bushfire Mitigation Fund, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Office of Environment and Heritage-Blue Mountains Region, the Blue Mountains City Council, the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub, and the Blue Mountains Gazette.

The *Fire Stories* project is a product of collaboration across the Blue Mountains community including government agencies and community organisations. The Institute thanks all those involved for their time, expertise and effort.

Anne Fitzgerald

Researcher



## Executive Summary

1. **THE FIRE STORIES PROJECT:** The *Fire Stories* film project commenced in 2012. It is a collaborative Blue Mountains community engagement exercise which has produced two Fire Stories documentary films: *Fire Stories—A Lesson in Time* (the first Fire Stories film - 2013) was based upon on the 1957 Blue Mountains bushfires; and *Fire Stories—Living With Risk* (2018) was based upon the 2013 Blue Mountains, focussing on those fires occurring in the Mid Mountains. Both films included footage and eye-witness accounts of the fires. Refer to page 12 for more details of the project rationale.
2. **FIRE STORIES—LIVING WITH RISK:** The production of this film was auspiced and produced by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute (BMWHI) and directed by Laura Zusters, with funding from the NSW Rural Fire Service Bushfire Mitigation Fund, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Office of Environment and Heritage Blue Mountains Region. It was launched with in-kind assistance from the Blue Mountains City Council, the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub and the *Blue Mountains Gazette*.
3. **SURVEY DESIGN:** The need to separate the audience into Recovery and General Community respondents presented challenges for the Impact Evaluation. The impact of the film would predictably be different for these two groups. Subjecting the Recovery Community to detailed pre and post viewing surveys about their shifts in bushfire awareness or preparedness was not appropriate, but for the General Community seeking such detail before and after viewing would provide valuable insights about the film’s impact. The Impact Evaluation design has therefore comprised two separate elements for each of these two cohorts. The Recovery Community survey prompted feedback in the form of open-ended questions about the film post-viewing. The General Community surveys sought demographic, engagement and bushfire awareness and preparedness in the pre and post viewing surveys, as well as feedback on the film itself.
4. **LAUNCH:** The second *Fire Stories* film was released in August 2018 and was viewed by approximately 1000 people at six cinema launch events, in August and September 2018. The first screening was viewed by survivors of the fires (members of the Recovery Community). Five of the six launch screening events were held at the Blue Mountains Community Theatre Hub at Springwood.
5. **RESPONDENTS:** From a possible pool of 380 email respondents, largely recruited via the online booking process, 229 people commenced a survey before viewing the film.
  - a. **RECOVERY COMMUNITY** - 140 respondents were members of the Recovery Community, and they were redirected from the pre-viewing survey to register to complete a post-viewing feedback survey. 51 members of the Recovery Community completed a post-viewing feedback survey.
  - b. **GENERAL COMMUNITY** - 89 members of the General Community completed a pre-viewing survey. Of this number 39 also completed the post-viewing survey for members of the general community.



6. PRE-VIEWING SURVEY FINDINGS – GENERAL COMMUNITY ONLY Respondents were asked to provide demographic information, as well as information on their engagement with Fire Stories, and baseline bushfire preparedness information.
  - a. DEMOGRAPHY Most respondents (70%) lived in the Mid-Mountains. 15% had an association with the making of the film; 30% were involved, or had a close relative involved, with emergency services; 95% of respondents were 40 years or older.
  - b. FIRE STORIES AND BUSHFIRE AWARENESS Most respondents attended the film ‘to learn about living with the risk of fire’. Pre-viewing respondents value *Fire Stories* films for raising bushfire risk-awareness. 71% had encouraged another person to view either the first *Fire Stories* film or the current release. The films are considered by respondents to be useful in teaching bushfire awareness and the importance of being prepared; many stated that this is an essential understanding for living in the Blue Mountains. 18% attended because the film was recommended, and 16% wanted to bring someone.
7. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE FILM: Overall response to the film was positive, with many respondents noting that they were impressed with the quality of the film and its effectiveness in depicting the experience of the fires and the aftermath.
  - Recovery Community respondents described the film as *good* (11), *very good* (13), or *excellent/extremely well done* (13). Of 45 respondents completing this section, 35 unprompted responses expressed congratulations and or thanks to the film makers and/or participants (APPENDIX A1 details the range of response).
  - General Community respondents (39) invited to list words in response to the film. 132 words in response expressed the impact/effectiveness/ quality of the film: 37 described their emotional response; 69 described the impact of the film; and 26 related to the quality and effectiveness of the film. (APPENDIX A2 details the range of response).
8. POST-VIEWING SURVEY FINDINGS – GENERAL COMMUNITY Despite smaller numbers of respondents (89 pre-viewing survey, 39 post-viewing survey) there are a number of clear trends in the post-viewing responses.
  - The film evoked strong emotions - *shocking, emotional, moving*. It was considered informative and useful - *helpful, inspiring, motivating*. Respondents generally applauded the quality of the film and the courage of the participants. They acknowledged the depiction of *real people real experiences real stories*. They described the film as *honest/vivid/graphic/epic/sobering*.
  - Most of respondents were surprised by the depiction of behaviour of catastrophic fire, and by the community response, and noted the implications for bushfire preparedness.
  - Within two weeks of viewing the film, 95% of respondents reported thinking about and speaking about the film with others, with many citing the conversation had included the need for bushfire preparation, awareness of risk, and the high quality of the film.
  - Respondents value the film as a tool to promote bushfire awareness (aggregate weighting of 5 on a 0-5 scale). Reasons for the high rating include the visual impact, local relatable content, and inclusion of the aftermath of the fires. A small number would



have preferred more detail on e.g. the history of fire in the area and more preparation details.

- **Preparedness** - The post-viewing sample is less than half the pre-viewing sample. Shifts in preparedness and preferred preparedness are detectable, but the low numbers advise caution in generalising. It is possible that viewing the film has contributed to respondents reassessing their current preparedness more conservatively: the percentage of those rating their current level of preparation as ‘a little prepared’ was 13% pre-viewing. This rose to 22% post viewing. The percentage who rated themselves ‘moderately’ prepared dropped from 42% to 22% post viewing.
- **Spheres of Concern** - Bearing in mind the small sample post-viewing, there was an ‘across the board’ reduction in the percentage of consideration registered as **No consideration / A little consideration**, and an increase in the percentage of consideration registered as **Moderate consideration / High consideration**. The most significant single rise (20%) post-viewing was registered in **High consideration of ‘Someone nearby who needs help’**.

9. POST-VIEWING FEEDBACK SURVEY–RECOVERY COMMUNITY Extensive open-ended feedback from 51 members of the Recovery Community has provided lessons for engagement on future projects, and suggestions informed by what respondents considered would have been useful to them confronting the 2013 fires.

- Most respondents commended the film’s quality and sensitivity and the courage of those who participated;
- Viewing the film was emotional for many, and for some it was traumatic;
- Respondents questioned the localised concentration of subjects (particularly Buena Vista Avenue) and several questioned the limited extent of the project’s engagement with the community;
- Policy and engagement suggestions were offered;
- Extensive advice was offered on messages and tips that survivors consider useful in confronting the reality of living with the risk of catastrophic fire.

The feedback of the Recovery Community indicates that there is further opportunity to convert awareness into preparedness by packaging and sharing insights of survivors of these fires that have been offered through the Feedback Survey responses.

10. Responses to all three surveys indicate the value of the Fire Stories film project is assisting community members to be agents of bushfire awareness within their communities and households. This is consistent with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2011 and the conceptual shift from the ‘professionalisation of responsibility’ within emergency management agencies to shared responsibility – including with communities and individuals.



## SECTION 1: Background

### 1.1 The Fire Stories Project

The Fire Stories Project is auspiced by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, in collaboration with NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Blue Mountains City Council. Its purpose is to facilitate and promote community bushfire awareness, preparedness and recovery at a time when the Blue Mountains and its residents, flora and fauna are at increasing risk of catastrophic fire.

The Fire Stories Project's two documentary films, *Fire Stories—A Lesson in Time* and *Fire Stories—Living With Risk*, have focused on two catastrophic fire incidents (1957 and 2013 respectively). Both feature film footage of the fires and the accounts of people directly affected by the fires reflecting upon the incidents. By evaluating the impact of both films the project is increasing understanding of the use of documentary as a medium for fostering local bushfire awareness.

#### *2015: Fire-Stories—A Lesson in Time*

An **impact evaluation** undertaken of the first Fire Stories film concluded that viewing *Fire Stories—A Lesson in Time* at a launch-screening event, i.e. followed by discussion and at a bushfire expo, had provided viewers with a vicarious experience of a major fire event: it produced a considerable increase in bushfire-safety activity in the lead up to the 2013 bushfires. This increase was found to have been sustained (over 20 months). The experience caused a shift in *focus of concern*, when preparing for bushfire, to include more concern for community. This shift in concern was sustained into the 2013 bushfires.

The first Fire Stories film project provided insight into creating product for effective and sustained bushfire awareness education, through quality documentary film making, presented in an information-rich, community setting. It found that the use of confronting imagery - the depiction of the speed and ferocity of the 1957 catastrophic fires and their penetration into townships - had a profound impact upon respondents, evoking a 'now I get it' response. Eye-witness accounts (i.e. residents who lived through the 1957 fires and witnessed the scale of destruction) personalised the experience of the fires and effectively communicated bushfire safety messages about protecting property and living safely in a bushfire prone area.

#### *2018: Fire Stories—Living With Risk*

Building upon the insights gained from the first Fire Stories project, the second, 2018 Fire Stories documentary film was made within the period of recovery and rebuilding following the catastrophic 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires. The 55minute film depicts first-hand accounts of some of the people affected by the catastrophic bushfires that destroyed over 200 homes in the Blue Mountains, and damaged over 200 more, during the spring of 2013. The film features the accounts of people who were affected by the fires in Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Springwood, and film footage of aspects of the fires and recovery.

### 1.2 2013 Bushfire Season

During late September 2013, warm, dry weather and strong winds contributed to significant early-season bushfire activity across NSW. Fire broke out near Lithgow on 16 October 2013. Known as the State Mine fire it spread up to 25 kilometres on 17 October, affecting the Lithgow and Bilpin areas,



with a loss of properties particularly on the outskirts of the Lithgow district, including the iconic Zig Zag Railway. The fire burned the northern region of the Blue Mountains National Park, parts of Wollemi National Park, affecting the communities of Bell, Berambing, Bilpin, Clarence, Dargan, Hartley Vale, Lithgow, McKellars Park, Mount Irvine, and Mount Wilson.

At around 1.30pm on 17 October fire broke out in Springwood in bushland adjacent to Linksvie Road. The fire spread over 3,500 hectares (8,600 acres) primarily in Winmalee and Yellow Rock and nearby bushland, destroying around 200 houses and damaging over 200 more.

On the same day a fire broke out near the Mount York Road, north northwest Mount Victoria. It destroyed seven houses, crossed the Darling Causeway to the east, into the Grose Valley, north of Mount Boyce and Blackheath. The fire moved west of Mount York Road and threatened properties in the Kanimbla and Megalong valleys.

On 22 October NSW RFS Commissioner advised residents to leave the Blue Mountains for the day. A change in the weather assisted in curtailing the threat, but the October fires burned dangerously for 10 days. As of 25 October 2013, fires in the Greater Blue Mountains Area had burnt out over 65,000 hectares (160,000 acres) in and around the Blue Mountains and Wollemi national parks.

### 1.3 The socio-ecological context for the Blue Mountains

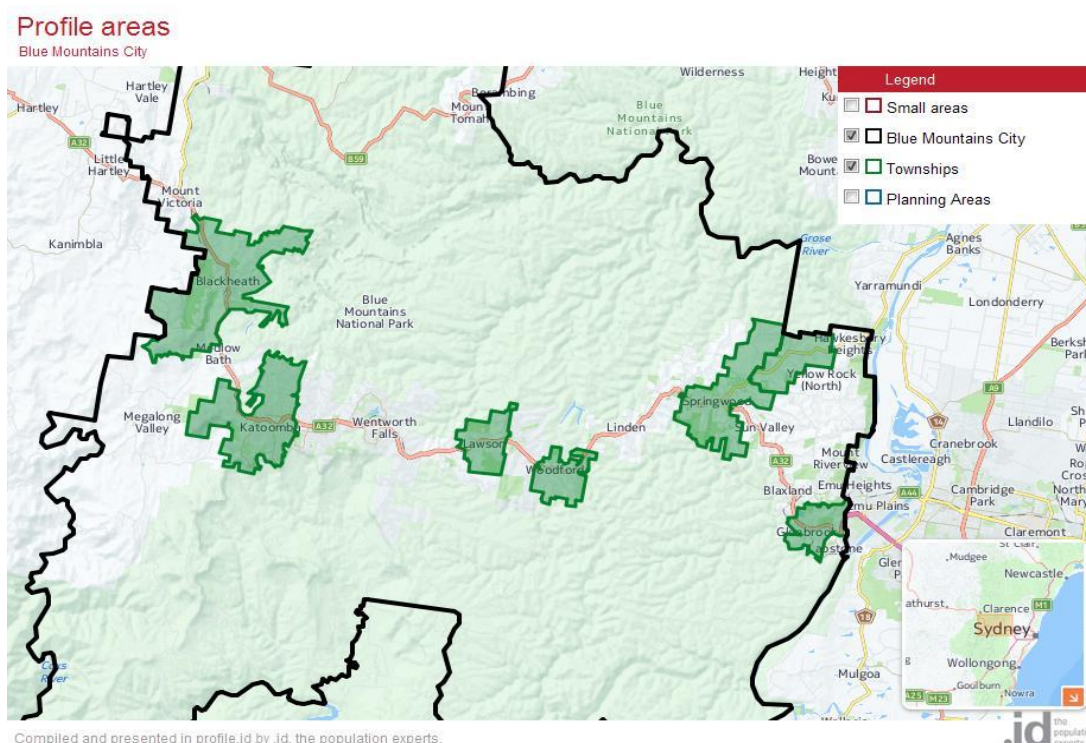
The Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA) covers 143,000 hectares of the Great Dividing Range in the west of the Greater Sydney Region of New South Wales (NSW). The population of approximately 79,000<sup>1</sup> is concentrated in 27 townships<sup>2</sup> located along a major ridgeline, forming a largely linear settlement that is 55 to 95 kilometres from the Sydney GPO. It is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world, making these communities extremely vulnerable to fire.

About 70% of the LGA is incorporated into the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. World Heritage listing of the area (1 million hectares) occurred in 2000 in recognition of its natural attributes of outstanding universal value, including its exceptional representation of a wide diversity of eucalypt species. The area hosts important vegetation communities, endangered flora and fauna populations, rugged geological landforms and sensitive soil landscapes. Much of the flora is dependent on appropriate fire intervals for regeneration and renewal.

The diverse flora and fauna have evolved over a long history of varying fire regimes, with evidence of Aboriginal habitation for more than 20,000 years. Unmanaged fire has serious impacts both ecologically and socially. Climate change and altered fire regimes since European settlement in Australia produce an increasing trend of severe uncontrollable bushfires. The ecology of the Blue Mountains is characterised by episodic destruction and re-growth of biomass, and unpredictable fire and ecosystem dynamics.

<sup>1</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/blue-mountains/about>

<sup>2</sup> It includes the localities of Bell, Berambing (part), Blackheath, Blaxland, Bullaburra, Faulconbridge, Glenbrook, Hawkesbury Heights, Hazelbrook, Katoomba, Lapstone, Lawson, Leura, Linden, Medlow Bath, Megalong Valley, Mount Irvine, Mount Riverview, Mount Tomah, Mount Victoria, Mount Wilson, Springwood, Sun Valley, Valley Heights, Warrimoo, Wentworth Falls, Winmalee, Woodford and Yellow Rock.



The Blue Mountains is a popular tourist destination and is accessible by means of a train line and a parallel dual carriageway for motor vehicles which is a significant urban transit corridor. Tourist activity is concentrated mainly in the Upper Mountains and there is a significantly higher concentration of residents in the Lower Mountains comprising mainly young families. The Upper Mountains have a higher proportion of older residents relatively dispersed throughout the area. The estimated number of employed persons in the Blue Mountains is 35,871 (59% full time) more than half of whom leave the Blue Mountains LGA daily for work.

Contemporary priorities for the management of fire on a landscape level aim to balance the protection of human life and property, and the protection of flora and species.

**Bush fire incidence<sup>3</sup>:** The Blue Mountains area has on average 28 bush fires per year, with nil to seven of these being major fires (those requiring at least 6 tankers to control or which run longer than 24 hours) which varies each year according to the seasonal conditions. The main sources of ignition in the Blue Mountains region are:

- Human cause—the most likely wildfire ignition risk is from deliberately lit fires either within the urban areas or close to highways, roads and tracks. Other human-caused fires are not as common as arson. Campfires are mainly found along rivers and walking tracks in the more popular recreational areas of the Blue Mountains National Park whereas ignitions from domestic causes are much higher within urban areas. Escapes from burn-off in or near the National Park are rare.

<sup>3</sup> Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee: Bush Fire Risk Management Plan RFS, 2010  
[http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/2350/Blue-Mountains-BFRMP.pdf](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2350/Blue-Mountains-BFRMP.pdf)



- Lightning—ignitions from lightning occur throughout the mountains particularly in spring and summer when storms are more common.

## 1.4 Engagement Policy Context

Since the 'Black Saturday' fires in Victoria in 2009, there has been a fundamental shift in policy for fire management and response, which involves a focus on empowering communities through knowledge of risk<sup>4</sup>. The policy of shared responsibility involves a conceptual shift from the 'professionalisation of responsibility' within emergency management agencies to active community engagement and empowerment to investigate their own risks and develop their own solutions.

## 1.5 Project Rationale: *Fire Stories-Living With Risk*

The 2013 bushfires were an event affecting most people in the Blue Mountains to some extent; during the 2013 the Fire Commissioner advised residents to leave the Blue Mountains. The concept for the film was to take viewers beyond the palls of smoke and news footage, both dominant features of the 2013 fires in most residents' memories, and into the homes and lives of their ordinary Blue Mountains contemporaries whose neighbourhoods were devastated.

The proximity of the bushfire event in time and place to the making of the film places the event in living memory of most viewers. The people featured, who tell their stories of the fires, of their survival and of the slow and ongoing recovery process, are contemporaries of the film's 2018 audience. The project rationale had three foci:

- 1. General Community Audience: To increase awareness of risk** By creating a film comprised entirely of the recollections, reflections and insights of the survivors of the 2013 fires (supported by archival footage of the fires) it was the project team's intention that audiences have the opportunity for vicarious learning of the reality of the bushfires, through the experience of those affected - who deeply understand what it means to be living with the risk of rapid catastrophic fire in the Blue Mountains. Viewers would thereby better understand the depth of the impact of unexpected catastrophic bushfire in residential areas, and the implications for themselves, in particular:
  - the fire's intensity and speed, and the importance of preparation in survival;
  - the unique needs and personal circumstances of individual residents, and the implications for individual household and workplace preparedness;
  - the duration and nature of the recovery process;
  - the importance of community and neighbours both during a fire event and in recovery;
  - the radical impact of the disaster on priorities of the people and communities affected.

Through this film the project team aimed to enhance bushfire awareness and to foster conversion of community awareness and recognition of bushfire threats into the actions of the Prepare, Act, Survive strategy of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

<sup>4</sup> See Australia's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2011. <https://www.coag.gov.au/node/81>



2. **Survivors and the Recovery Community: To learn how the film is received by the recovery community.** The film was produced and screened within the period of recovery for survivors of the 2013 bushfires. It was almost entirely comprised of their input – their experiences of the fires and their insights. The film was launched in proximity to the location of the 2013 fires in the Mid Mountains and was promoted to the recovery community. The context for the project presented an opportunity to learn about the value and impact of the film project for the recovery community.
3. **Community engagement with *Fire Stories*: To learn the extent to which the *Fire Stories* films are valued and used as tools for the community to promote awareness of risk.** The film projects aim to demonstrate the principle of shared responsibility as community members are depicted reflecting upon their own risks and developing their own solutions to living with the risk of bushfire.

### 1.6 *Fire Stories-Living With Risk – Impact Evaluation*

The Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute secured funding from the NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Office of Environment and Heritage Blue Mountains Region to investigate the impact of the second *Fire Stories* film.

The project team comprised Anne Fitzgerald (researcher) with assistance from Jennifer Bartlett (Member of the Board of BMWHI) and A/Prof. John Merson (Executive Director BMWHI).

## SECTION 2: Impact Evaluation

1. The Impact Evaluation is designed to elicit:

- What people thought about the film and how it affected them;
- Whether *Fire Stories* audiences are making use of the films to promote awareness and self-responsibility within the community;
- Whether viewing the film changed -
  - . their understanding of the risk of bushfire in the Blue Mountains; and
  - . bushfire preparedness levels (current level and aspirations).

2. The Impact Evaluation was also designed to assist the project team to learn about the impact of the process and the film on the recovery community. To this end it is designed to be an opportunity for audience members who are part of the Recovery Community:

- To provide feedback about the film and the process; as well as
- Observations and suggestions for enhancing engagement and bushfire awareness.

3. The research involved one pre-viewing survey, and a post-viewing survey for each of two cohorts -

- Members of the 2013 bushfire 'Recovery Community'; and
- Members of the 'General Community' defined as those who self-identify as either being only indirectly affected by the fires, or not affected.

The Impact Evaluation survey period commenced three days prior to the launch of the film (at six events from 25 August to 8 September) and concluded on 20 September 2018.

### 2.1 Recruiting Respondents

Respondents were recruited from audience members at a series of 6 film launch events held over two weeks from 25 August – 8 September 2018.

These film-launch events were held in an 'information-rich' setting, i.e., the viewings were accompanied by bushfire awareness information – BMWHI, Parks, RFS and other fire service personnel were present before and after the film to provide information and answer questions. The first launch event was for members of the 2013 Bushfires 'recovery community'. The six events included:

- Springwood Hub on Saturday 25 August 2018 (four sessions: 12.00pm for the recovery community; and 2.00pm, 3.30pm and 5.00pm for the general community);
- The Fairmont at Leura on Thursday evening on 6 September 2018; and at the
- Springwood Hub on Saturday 8 September 2018 (at the BMEE Bushfire Building Conference and Community Expo).

In the process of booking online to attend one of the four launch events on 25 August, the person making the booking supplied an email address. Using this email address, potential respondents were sent an invitation to complete the pre-viewing survey. From 403 people making online bookings 380 successful email addresses were used resulting in 199 people completing the pre-viewing surveys.



The final 2 launch sessions (6 Sept at the Fairmont and 8 Sept at the Bushfire Expo) were not 'booked' events. These events were promoted via the *Blue Mountains Gazette* and the *BM Firewatch* Facebook page. A survey link URL was created and published as part of that promotion ([www.firesurvey.com.au](http://www.firesurvey.com.au)). This recruited a further 30 pre-viewing survey respondents (total 229).

## 2.2 Pre-viewing Survey

**Filtering Respondents** Online Pre-viewing Survey respondents, recruited via the email address supplied when booking their film tickets online, were filtered into two cohorts within the first two questions of the Pre-viewing Survey:

- I. those closely affected by the fires, referred to as **Recovery Community** respondents; and
- II. those less closely affected, referred to as **General Community** respondents.

Of the 229 people who completed the pre-viewing survey, 140 (61%) identified as having been directly affected by the fires ('Recovery Community'). Once this was identified they were diverted from the main body of the pre-viewing survey, and invited to volunteer to provide feedback via a dedicated post-viewing feedback survey.

All respondents who volunteered an email address for the purpose were sent the appropriate Post-viewing Survey link a minimum of a week after viewing the film. The surveys closed on the afternoon of Friday 20 September 2018. A total of 90 people completed both pre-viewing and post-viewing surveys: 51 Recovery Community respondents and 40 General Community respondents (including one test respondent).

**Recovery Community respondents** This group has been directly impacted by the 2013 bushfire; it is likely that their responses to the film would differ from members of the community who were not directly impacted.

In designing a simple, post-viewing feedback survey for the recovery community we were mindful of several points:

- 1) that this group is considered likely to have experienced research fatigue, which may affect response rate;
- 2) that this group was viewing the film in the context of recovery, and that particular sensitivities may be triggered by the film, the process and /or the research;
- 3) every effort would be made to minimise aggravation through the research process;
- 4) their recent experience of catastrophic fire affords them unique insights into programs for awareness and prevention. As such their feedback will be extremely valuable.

**General Community respondents** Pre-viewing Survey respondents who self-identified at the outset as having been indirectly affected by the 2013 bushfires, or not affected, completed an extensive Pre-viewing Survey. Their responses provided a baseline of preparedness and understanding of selected subjects, for later comparison. They also provided insights into audience demography and engagement with the Fire Stories films. At the conclusion of the Pre-viewing Survey respondents were invited supply an email address if they agreed to be invited to also undertake a Post-viewing Survey.

## 2.3 Post-viewing Surveys

**Recovery Community Post-Viewing Feedback Survey** Due to the proximity of the film in time and place to members of the 2013 bushfires recovery communities, particularly in the Mid Mountains, the impact the film on this group warranted investigation. In addition to eliciting feedback on the film, survey questions prompted respondents to relate the impact of the film and the project on recovery community members.

The survey was also an opportunity to invite insight on awareness-raising from those who were confronted by the need to act during the 2013 crisis, drawing upon their current knowledge and preparation at the time of the fires. It was also an opportunity to learn from their experiences and insights during the recovery period – especially their reflections on preparedness, and steps taken to recover and prepare their properties for the ongoing possibility of fire.

Respondents who had self-identified as having been directly affected by the 2013 bushfires, and had supplied an email address, thereby indicating a willingness to be invited to provide feedback on the film, were sent the survey link to the Post-viewing Feedback Survey. It was comprised of four open-ended questions, or ‘prompts’:

1. What did you think of the film?
2. What, if anything, would you change?
3. Do you have any suggestions for increasing bushfire awareness in the Blue Mountains?
4. General comments.

**General Community Post-viewing Survey** A week after the 25 August film launch events respondents who provided an email address and were not directly affected by the 2013 bushfires were sent a link to a ‘General Community’ Post-viewing Survey designed to elicit information from the General Community that could be used to:

- . Identify what was learnt from the film;
- . Identify unexpected (‘surprising’) responses, and whether these led to any change in intention/action;
- . Gauge alterations in intentions and actions to increase bushfire preparedness relating to bushfires as a result of viewing the film:
- . Explore any change in concern for others who may be affected by bushfire, and analyse the relative changes evident in the impact evaluation of Fire Stories-A Lesson in Time:
- . Learn what value residents place on the Fire Stories films in promoting awareness in their own communities and networks;
- . Identify the needs and challenges of respondents in realising their hopes for better preparedness.



## SECTION 3: Results

### 3.1 Pre-viewing Surveys

#### 3.11 Who Participated?

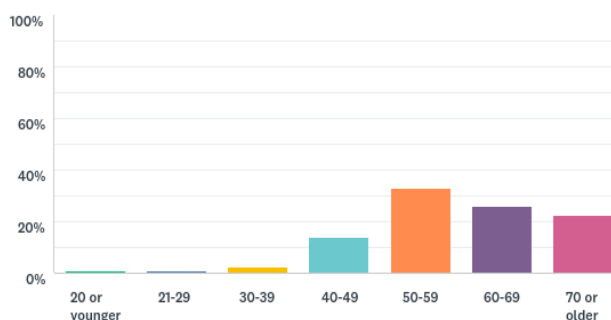
86% of the 229 respondents were in the Blue Mountains during the 2013 bushfires; 61% (140) reported that they were directly affected by fires, known in this research as Recovery Community Respondents; 21% were indirectly affected; 16% were not affected. The latter two groups are known collectively in this research as General Community respondents (89).

The 140 Recovery Community respondents were diverted to an invitation to provide an email contact if they were prepared to consider completing a post-viewing feedback survey. The remaining General Community respondents went on to complete the pre-viewing survey for the General Community. Of these:

Gender	60% are women
Fire Services	70% had no involvement (nor close family member involvement) with fire services
Film	15% were involved with the film or knew someone who was involved with the film (this excluded the 'Recovery Community' respondents).
Family:	51% are in an adult couple, no children at home; 23% were in families with two parents and children; 19% were single adults; and 5% were sole parents.
Age:	95% are at least 40 years of age, with 33% between 50-59%. 48% are over 60 (53.4% of the Blue Mountains population is under 40).
Home:	85% are home owners; (75% of Blue Mountains residents own or are buying their home).
Residence:	95% live in Blue Mountains, and 72% lived in the area in 2013. 70% live in the Mid Mountains (incl 40% Winmalee/ Yellow Rock/Springwood).

**TABLE 1** Respondents Age

Q18 Which category below includes your age?





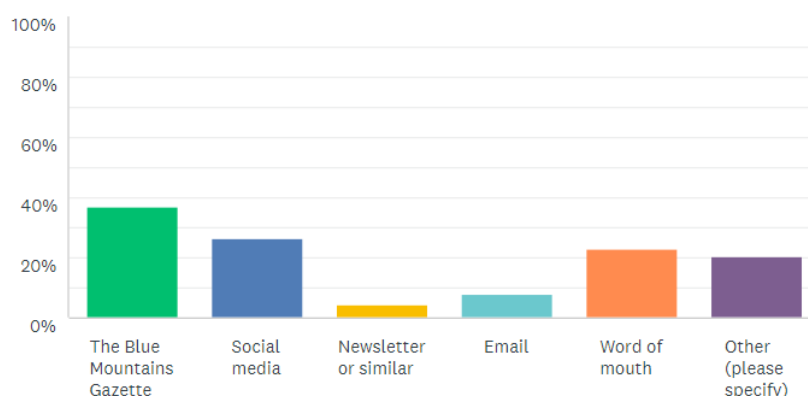
### 3.12 Why They Came to View Fire Stories 2

Of the initial 87 ‘General Community’ respondents completing the pre-viewing survey, 37% learned about the film via the Blue Mountains Gazette, 26% via social media and 20% (16) via word of mouth (a friend or neighbour). Five people made comments that they attended because they had recently moved to the area.

TABLE 2 Source – Learned About Film Launch

How did you learn about this film?

Answered: 87 Skipped: 142



When asked why they booked to see the film (multiple options),

- . 60% report that they came to the launch to learn about living with the risk of bushfire;
- . 44% had a general interest;
- . 32% stated they were affected by the fires; (excludes the ‘Recovery Community’ respondents);
- . 18% reported that the film was recommended by another;
- . 16% wanted to bring someone;
- . 15% were involved, or knew someone involved, in the making of the film.

### 3.13 Previous Fire Stories Viewing

Of 86 Pre-viewing respondents 28% had already seen *Fire Stories – A Lesson in Time*. 71% had encouraged another to view either the first Fire Stories film or the current release; 59 respondents explained why they had encouraged another to view a Fire Stories film. Text analysis of their explanations reveals all consider that Fire Stories films are useful in teaching bushfire awareness.

Q10 Why have you encouraged another to view a Fire Stories film?

see affected community understand important thinking prepare learn  
 fire people live bushfires risk us Blue Mountains local  
 bushfire area need Mountains



### 3.14 Other Pre-viewing Survey Responses

The Pre-viewing Survey for the General Community included questions designed to provide a baseline for assessing the impact on attitudes to bushfire preparedness of viewing *Fire Stories-Living With Risk*. Responses to these questions are meaningful to this research where the follow-up survey was also completed. The Pre and Post-viewing Survey responses are therefore considered together in the later *Section 3.22 General Community Post-Viewing Survey*. The sample of 89 Pre-viewing is reduced to 39 post-viewing, rendering those results indicative rather than definitive.

## 3.2 Post-Viewing Survey Responses

### 3.21 Recovery Community Post-viewing Feedback Survey

Sample: of the 229 people who completed the pre-viewing survey, 140 (61%) were members of the recovery community. Of this group 51 completed the Post-viewing Feedback Survey for the Recovery Community.

Responses to the four, open-ended survey questions, or ‘prompts’ were de-identified, and analysed as far as practicable to elicit trends and enable clustering of themes.

The responses are rich with suggestions for awareness and engagement needs and strategies, informed by what respondents considered would have been useful to them confronting the 2013 fires. The responses warrant close reading (see **Appendix 1 – Recovery Community Responses**).

Whilst individual responses present a large range of unique and valuable insights it is possible to generalise a number of clear trends:

- . Viewing the film has been emotional for many, and at times traumatic;
- . Respondents commended the film’s quality and the courage of those who participated;
- . Respondents questioned the localised concentration of subjects (particularly Buena Vista Avenue);
- . Respondents provided many insights on better preparedness, and suggestions for passing on the insights they have gained from their experience of the 2013 bushfires to the community.

**SUMMARY OF RESPONSES** The following summary is not exhaustive of the insights of respondents. Reading of Appendix 1 is recommended.

#### **Question 1 – What did you think of the film?**

The responses of members of the recovery community indicated that most respondents were moved and impressed by the film. Many referred to the sensitivity and quality of the film, which most described as *good* (11) or *very good* (13) or *excellent/extremely well done* (13); three responded that the film was *‘okay’* and one considered it *‘Not particularly informative’*.

Several people noted that the film included a focus on the human and emotional impact of the fire and identified this as a strength.



*(This Fire Stories film) was very different from the first, more about people than fire facts. Impact for preparedness much stronger. Great footage and superb storytelling.*

*It was really good! A good balance between what it felt like on the day, people's stories and then what to do next time. The feelings of that day were brought back once again. I think that it really did hit the audience about what it was like.*

*You have brought out some really important themes that need to be communicated to people, particularly those who have recently moved to the mountains. These include the need to do basic preventative maintenance, that there are only a limited number of volunteers/ vehicles and that every house can't be saved, the need to take responsibility for your own home, BAL ratings, planning to evacuate, renovating with intentional thought for fire risk, etc. ... I appreciated that the focus was on the '**people impact**' of the fires, as much as loss of property. (X) worked in police work and seen some horrific stuff in (their) work but had never before experienced the level of trauma that (they) went through on that day<sup>5</sup>.*

Four people noted or expressed some discontent with the content or omissions

*It was very good, but didn't cover all aspects of course of fire.*

*Would like to have seen more around Lower end of Yellow Rock.*

*Very interesting but made me sad. Not particularly informative. No mention at all of the role of Phil Koperberg and his community meetings which were a lifeline to us afterwards. Highly selective in giving credit to only a couple of the organizations which provided assistance.*

Many considered that a good balance had been struck in the unavoidable need to select stories and treatment:

*I thought it was very good- there was so much that could have been included but the film gave a good snapshot of the event and was well balanced between the day of the event and the recovery.*

Five referred to inclusion of recovery and community as a positive feature of the film:

*It was a good collection of stories from that day, and the recovery after. Well put together.*

*Most of all I loved seeing what an amazing community we are blessed to live in.*

*It was hard to watch but it also showed what it was like. It was great to see the film then turn around to a positive showing the resilience of people and the closeness of the Blue Mountains Community.*

*Very well produced. I had a fair amount of trepidation in seeing the film as thought/ knew it would stir up vivid feelings and memories, and naturally it did. I shed a few quiet tears initially - but was super grateful that it quickly moved from some traumatic images to then focusing on people's lived experiences and shared stories of recovery, and community. Very impressed by this sensitivity shown. Even had a couple of laughs later on.*

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<sup>5</sup> Responses have had identifying information removed



These responses are also indicative of many references to the emotional impact of the film, or of anticipating the launch, included in feedback by the recovery community respondents.

*I found it very upsetting & cried watching it because it brought back many memories of living through it. .... I remained hyper vigilant for a few years, whenever I heard a siren or helicopter or smelled smoke. Having said that, I thought the film was a good account of what happened.*

*It was very moving. It reminded me of that day when people close to me lost so much and brought me to tears. I saw several people I know.*

*It was very poignant and evoked many memories. Some of which I would rather not have revisited - but that is my problem.*

*As a resident who lost their home, I found it very moving...*

*Very emotional watching. It was hard to watch at some points as it brought back the feeling of what I felt during the fires. ... It was informative, an eye opener and an emotional viewing experience, a very worthwhile film to see.*

*My wife and I thought that it was a great film and quite moving throughout. ... it was personal in the sense that my wife's best friend lost her home and all her possessions in the fire...*

*We thought the film was excellent, well made and very emotional. I guess being touched by the fires caused that to happen, though the people's stories were moving.*

Comments that included emotional impact most often went on to commend the film. However, three did not, or were more equivocal.

*It was a grim reminder of what we had been through.*

*It was quite emotional to see the footage of the fire again and renew the feelings it provoked. Really moving to hear affected people speaking about their recovery.*

*Very interesting but made me sad. Not particularly informative... (critical of omissions of more support services).*

Many respondents referred to the learning or insights to be gained from viewing the film, particularly relating to the need to be better prepared

*... It made me even more aware of the need to prepare as much as possible but to leave if given the choice.*

*Very real, poignant and realistic about our choice to live in a high-risk area and the very real likelihood of it all happening again.*

*Everyone has hopefully learned much and will remember to share their lessons with new and old residents alike.*

*It provided a very good insight into the real risks people face in our area, how quickly a fire can spread, how in some areas escape routes can be easily cut off and the consequences of a fire occurring when no one is home.*

*I'm sure people will leave and know that disasters do happen, and they can happen to anyone. Preparedness is an important key.*

**Question 2** What, if anything, would you change about the film?

In addition to asking for feedback on the film, this question sought to gain more understanding of the responses of the recovery community members to the film. The making and release of the film occurred within the recovery period. The 25 August launch events occurred close to the location of the fires, at Springwood. The first screening was reserved for members of the recovery community. The impact the film in this context warranted closer investigation.

The responses reflected a number of trends:

- 17 of the 48 respondents would change ‘nothing’ about the film,
- The most prevalent of the remaining 31 responses (14) noted that stories were from a limited area or a limited pool of people. They would have preferred more stories/other people/areas included. One acknowledged the requirement for limitations

*Would have liked to see maybe more personal stories but not sure how that would have fitted in*

Some made more tentative suggestions

*Maybe getting more people to tell their stories.*

Others were unequivocal

*As a resident who lost their home, I was not aware of the film until a few weeks ago. Those I have spoken to in my street were not aware of the film being made, despite our street losing more than half - 65% of homes (17 of 26 homes). I understand that everyone could not be part of the film, however I would have sought input from each street to determine what to include, to create a more balanced representation of areas of Yellow Rock, rather than an over representation of Buena Vista Road.*

*All the focus was on two areas. My street where 5 homes were lost and another lot damaged was not even mentioned, which surprised me. It seems to me that in the time available you can concentrate on the people and their stories OR look at precautions, building costs and under insurance etc but not both. This film was nice but didn't really explore anything useful.*

- Six respondents referred to the **fire fighters**. Of these two referred to the impact on fire fighters and their recovery, and one referred to post-fire criticism of their efforts.

*Who counselled and supported the bushfire fighters? The animosity and dislike of the RFS immediately post this fire was not mentioned. I think it should have been just to show the negativity that arises from disasters and again how this was dealt with by not just the residents but the Bushfire fighters. I know the feeling died a natural death but it was a real and very difficult time for the people in their yellows.*

Several felt greater inclusion of the fire fighters’ contribution would have been preferred;

*The RFS guys not only live in the area but also selflessly defend the area, even though that may mean they don't get home’.*

*The bushfire brigade was not really represented except for a few shots of tankers. I would like to have heard from the Bushfire Fighters, who risk their lives EVERYTIME there is a*





*bushfire. How did this fire impact on them? How do they cope with the risk they face each time they attend a fire?*

One respondent hoped a future documentary will examine the role of volunteer firefighters.

Four respondents mentioned the omission of the impact on the schools in the area. Two would have liked the film to include detail on the situation in the evacuation centre at the Springwood Sports Club.

On two occasions particular elements of the film were both lauded and criticised. One person expressed appreciation for the film's treatment of pets:

*What hit me the most was the fact that people's pets can be trapped with no provision for them to be rescued. This would be the most devastating thing for me: the thought of my pet or my neighbour's burning to death and not being able to do anything to prevent it and your film made it clear many animals died this way. I don't know if a film such as yours can do much to promote some sort of arrangement amongst neighbours whereby if a fire is immanent and the house owners are absent that pets can be rescued by neighbours. If a pet is inside the house I would be reluctant to break a window to get in because that would mean the house would almost certainly go up in flames. However, if an arrangement between neighbours existed and a key exchanged, the animals could be evacuated by neighbours.*

Two considered there was too much attention on pets:

*I appreciate that people love animals like their own children, but loss of life for people and pets are two different things. I guess this was only one person's opinion.*

*Less emphasis on pets with problems. Yes I know people love their pets but we didn't need to hear about the pets' medical and dietary issues in such detail.*

One wanted more coverage of other 2013 fire locations; another wanted less

*It was unfortunate that the film did not cover the State Mine Fire and the Mt York Rd Fire. These fires were left out of the film despite the huge size of the state mine fire and the fact that 10 houses were destroyed at Mt Victoria*

*Leave the Mt Victoria footage out of it.*

**Two responses disagreed with the selection of different interviewees.**

In the following question respondents were asked for suggestions for increasing bushfire awareness in the Blue Mountains. A number offered suggestions before they arrived at that question, including, from a single respondent, the need to help people understand:

- . the experience of students, children and families;
- . the importance of the 'bushfire safety plan pack';
- . the 'stay and defend' kit should include eye protection and treatment;
- . the gear needed if defending a property;
- . the need for maintenance and testing of gear if it is to be relied upon;
- . temperature damage - even if flames are kept at bay.

One respondent emphasised the need for people to understand the inability of emergency services to assist in a rapid emergency, noting that fire services were deployed elsewhere when the Winmalee and Yellow Rock crisis occurred.

**Question 3 Do you have suggestions for future projects to increase bushfire awareness in the Blue Mountains?**

38 of 45 respondents proposed strategies and messages that would assist the Blue Mountains community living with fire risk.

**FILM USE** Nine respondents confined their responses to the suggestion that *Fire Stories-Living With Risk* be shown widely with several recommending that it be shown free at cinemas and on national television.

*Play this movie!*

A further ten suggested other film ideas. Three considered short films would be useful in engaging the community – either edited extracts from *Fire Stories-Living With Risk* or more short films on a range of themes.

*Short films that explore various scenarios would go a long way to helping educate communities that ultimately still aren't well prepared for emergencies, even though they are good at rallying together during or after.*

Other ideas for films included exploring:

*Common mistakes/ hazards increasing bushfire risk;*

*Several fire plans that people can adopt;*

*How quickly the fire moved on a map with a timeline (and) show safe places at other spots in the mountains.*

Two respondents referred to the value of the film for audiences beyond the Blue Mountains.

*Another fire stories film that explores how various types of people, family units, elderly, non-English speaking etc, etc could be a fantastic resource for local and Australian wide audiences.*

**OTHER STRATEGIES FOR AWARENESS-RAISING** Other strategies recommended included community education at shopping centres (4), community get togethers, letter drops, and expanding the Red Cross Pillowcase Project for primary schoolchildren:

*It has been really useful in promoting family conversations on preparedness. It would be really beneficial to be able to run this program or something similar regularly.*

**CONTENT** A range of ideas and questions for further exploration were raised such as:

*... the factors that made individual houses more of a risk while others were saved. What saved particular houses? We know that having clean rooves, gutters and neat gardens help but as the film showed if you weren't home then you couldn't do much. Was particular vegetation a help or a hindrance, eg large trees. Was it the design of the houses themselves? Very fierce fires and crazy winds may not make any strategies particularly useful but people will want to blame themselves if there was something they could have done.*



*How about more strategies for preserving memories. Strategies for supporting victims, survivors, firefighters and support serves? How soon should you leave? Work through the fire plan (for those who work, are at home, have pets, disabled or elderly). More on how to assess your insurance requirements.*

*How can my wife and I retrofit our home to make it more fire resistant? I think (we need) some more practical hints on what we can do for ourselves as part of our regular home maintenance program.*

Many respondents spelled out the messages that they consider need to be promoted:

*As we live in a bushfire prone area, we feel the message should be about a year round attitude to fire safety and not something we only think about before the “bushfire season”. Winter jobs of pushing back scrub and overhanging branches near homes and sheds are important factors in being ready for the summer months.*

*More education in schools about bushfire preparations would mean that children would encourage their parents to perform bushfire safety projects around the home and the children would grow up to be much better “firewise” adults as well.*

Respondents suggested outlining the processes for staying, going and where to take refuge in the case of fires in the mountains. Several raised the need for clarity about where to take refuge, as well the difficulty of getting answers and updates when services are down.

*I still don't know where we are to evacuate to in Winmalee. There was talk of Summerhayes but then I heard no?? Also, the fact that landlines don't work, power is off & how to combat that by having a battery powered radio so you can listen to updates. I had to sit in my car to hear updates but if you in didn't have a car how would you know what was happenin?*

Promotion of the AIDER home assist program was encouraged.

**2013 SURVIVOR ADVICE - A RESOURCE** Based upon their experience of the 2013 bushfires, many respondents had practical advice for both preparation and response in a fire crisis. Some had also provided such advice in response to the previous question. One recommended the creation of a resource based upon their experiences.

*A summary of tips from those who lost their homes (or homes survived) in the fires i.e how to prepare homes, what to pack for evacuation.*

*Regarding Yellow Rock No safe zone Available One road In & Out.*

*The need to be aware of costs involved prior to rebuilding - clearing your block etc were not mentioned.*

*The suggestion to have a bag packed is a good one; we had this but we were not at home. I suggest having a bag with spare clothes etc. at a friend or relative's house. Building materials that don't burn and at least give a family time to get out.*

*... Remove flammable curtains from windows and close all windows and blinds, wet towels at base of doors to outside , and when fire is near wear a handbag across the body with mobile phone, charger, credit cards, medications etc.*



*When people purchase a dwelling or land in the Blue Mountains they should be made aware of the risk of bushfire. They need to be made aware that each village has a Rural Fire Brigade which they need to make themselves familiar with to get a plethora of information about living with the risk of bushfire and being prepared.*

**POLICY** Three respondents raised policy matters. One respondent would prefer that the Text service alert people that there is a fire in the area *whether it's high risk or not.*

Another questioned development in flame zones.

*New houses are going up at the top of ridges very close to the bush and where westerly/north westerly winds are most likely to drive a fire. There is not much new land available for development but it is happening in most inappropriate places.*

The third raised a range of issues about the efficacy of the new building codes, and a lack of warning about under-insurance.

*On the day a number of the homes lost were less than 12 months old and had been built to the new and very expensive standards - but they were destroyed just as completely. We have no idea what is the use of these extra and expensive building requirements as they did not protect the homes in question. This is vital information as the reason most people found themselves underinsured was that the new building codes had been introduced just a year before the fire, so residents had not caught up with the new costs. No one had been warned by Council.*

Two respondents found elements of the film less helpful.

*I had no idea what precautions, if any had been taken by any of the people who lost their homes, so in that sense it was not really helpful.*

The second felt the target audience was people with less experience of bushfires.

*... I am bushfire aware and having been at home during this fire as it passed all around and over us and received no help from the RFS or other emergency personnel during the fire. For me personally I learnt nothing to make me more bushfire aware from watching this film. The film should be targeted at an audience who has not experienced a bushfire, rather than one that was intimately involved in it. Apart from the advice from the pet owner and the Pre-School principal, as to what to put in a carry-out bag, most of the advice was very general and could be more specific.*

#### **Question 4    General Comments**

Of 45 respondents completing this section, 35 expressed congratulations and or thanks to the film makers and/or participants.

*Just well done and thank you again for the producer's sensitivity, and for not over dramatising or sensationalising any aspects of the whole experience. Also a debt of gratitude to those who participated, with courage and honesty.*

*Well done. Thank you. It made the very accurate observation that people generally go above and beyond to help each other in situations. I also liked that one of the stories involved the phenomena of survivor guilt and the changed nature of neighbourhoods post fires.*



Respondents took the opportunity under GENERAL COMMENTS to pass on stories of other survivors, including resources that may assist in future projects. Some also passed on insight about the behaviour of the fires, based upon family knowledge gained over time and surviving previous fires, which may be of assistance to the Fire Stories project partners.

Several respondents refer to the 'stay or go' dilemma and changes in this area. A few made comment on the way the film was perceived prior to attending.

*Not what I expected.*

*Many people seemed to think it was purely an educational, informative film. I think the promotion of it probably didn't entice people to attend.*

One questioned whether the film will be as useful to people in the future or to those who may not have background knowledge of the 2013 fires.

*The film may not make that much sense to those in the future with no fire experiences. Some of the scenes, although appreciated by the audiences, may have others wondering.*

Two respondents made practical suggestions to assist those who found the film stirred difficult emotions: tissues at the door and counsellors on hand.

*Very well done. May be offer tissues at the door going in and out. Some people were very stressed. I was a bit shocked at how graphic it was but wouldn't delete anything. I will look at it again when I can face it. In the meantime: thank you for acknowledging what people experienced.*

*Good idea having a session for the local residents with speakers beforehand. As parts of the film were confronting, I would have arranged for counsellors to be on hand to provide support and I would have announced that there were counsellors there to talk to afterwards, if seeing the film raised issues for people. This was done at Winmalee High School when they ran the play about the bushfire.*

## 3.22 General Community Post-viewing Survey

Of the 229 people who completed the pre-viewing survey, 89 (39%) were members of the general community. Of this group 39 (44%) completed the Post-viewing Survey for the General Community. The nature of the research requires some effort on the part of the respondent, both pre and post-viewing. The responses are dense with information, and the findings reveal consistency and trends, which provide many valuable insights from this launch-screening audience.

### Unprompted Responses to the Film

In order to capture lingering impressions of the film (minimum one week after viewing) post-viewing survey respondents were asked to list three words that best summarised their 'responses to the film', and all 39 respondents took full advantage of the opportunity (APPENDIX A2). This was followed by an invitation to list 'anything that had surprised them' in the film, which was aimed at identifying possible shifts in understanding.



- A** Responses to the film have been classified as: **emotional response, impact of the film** and **film feedback**. In summary:
- 35 responses have been classified as **emotional responses**, indicating that the film evoked powerful emotions. Words occurring frequently include *shocking, emotional, moving* and *heart-warming*;
  - 80 responses have been classified as **impact of the film**. They include words like *informative, educational, helpful, inspiring, motivating*; words referring to bushfire *preparation* are prevalent. Many of these responses also referred to *community*. Interestingly, people included qualities that the film has inspired - *commitment, determination, caution, humility*;
  - The **film feedback** class of responses generally acknowledged the value of *real people/real experiences/real stories*. They used terms like *honest/vivid/graphic/epic/sobering*.
- B** ‘What, if anything surprised you?’ Of the 37 respondents who answered this question, 4 responded ‘nothing’, referring to previous experience with other bushfires. The rest were prolific in their responses:
- The most frequent surprise element was the severity of fire behaviour, referred to by 20 respondents;
  - 14 responses were community related: *community response, the shift in priorities, and the strength and resilience of individuals*;
  - 9 responses indicated what they learned about readiness/preparedness, with a further 5 mentioning the distinct circumstances of individuals and groups or the idiosyncratic nature of preparedness and response;
  - Several noted the impact on people, the *sense of loss and the depth of recovery*;
  - 6 responses referred to the quality of the film and the generosity of those involved in sharing their stories
  - One was surprised that the Upper Mountains fires weren’t featured.

### Thinking About and Discussing the Film

The evaluation seeks to gauge the way the Fire Stories project assists the community to share the responsibility for bushfire awareness, as indicated by how audiences discuss and promote the film to others. In the period since viewing the film (one - two weeks):

- 95% of respondents reported thinking about/speaking with others about the film since viewing it;
- 75% percent spoke to people other than those with whom they attended the screening;
- Most of those who chose to explain the nature of the conversation (22) referred to the need for **preparation, planning, awareness of risk** (19); the remainder referred to ‘how good it is’;
- 76% had already recommended the film. All but one of these referred to its value in **teaching bushfire awareness and the impact on community**. (Appendix A2-iv) with comments like



'we decided our house isn't as safe as it could be'. Many noted that it is essential viewing in the mountains.

TABLE 3 Talked About the Film

Q5 Have you talked about the film since viewing? Please click on the most suitable statement.

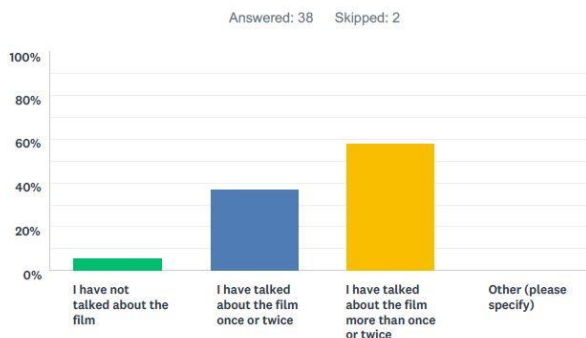


TABLE 4 With Whom Discussed

Q6 With whom did you talk about the film?



Film as Awareness Tool

When asked to 'rate the usefulness of the film in helping you and/or others to better understand living with the risk of bushfire' (Where 0 is 'not useful' and 5 is 'very useful')

24 of 37 respondents rated 5; 12 respondents rated 4; 1 rated 3.

Of the 36 comments most made reference to the *visual impact*, the *local, relatable and personal content*, the *inclusion of recovery and the aftermath*. Several observed that the film did not provide details of the fire history and planning details, implying that this detracted from its value.

Q10 What is your reason for this ranking?

planning bushfires need prepare issues made  
 stories live home fire Gave people risk film  
 insight



### Self-ranking of Preparedness

Respondents were asked to rate their **current and preferred** preparedness **before and after** viewing the film. They were asked to **attribute any perceived shift** in levels in the time between viewing the film and completing the survey (1-2 weeks)

The General Community pre-viewing sample is comprised of 89 respondents, and the post-viewing sample is 39 respondents. The disparity in size and the relatively smaller sample post-viewing requires caution in the analysis of the results. Viewing the film has caused changes to current and preferred levels of preparedness for a proportion of the 39 people responding to both surveys.

TABLE 5 **Pre-viewing** rating of preparedness (Weighted ave on a scale of 0-5 = 3.26)

Q19 How would you rate your preparedness for bushfire? (Click under the statement closest to your situation)

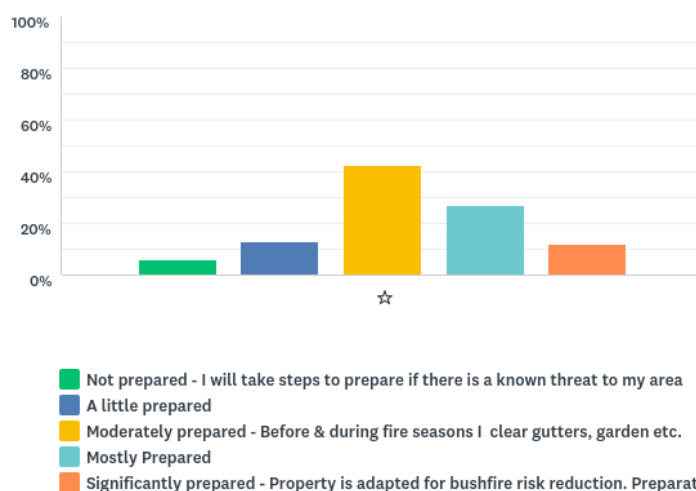


TABLE 6 **Pre-viewing** rating of preferred level of preparedness (Weighted ave = 4.73)

Q20 What is your preferred level of preparedness for bushfire?

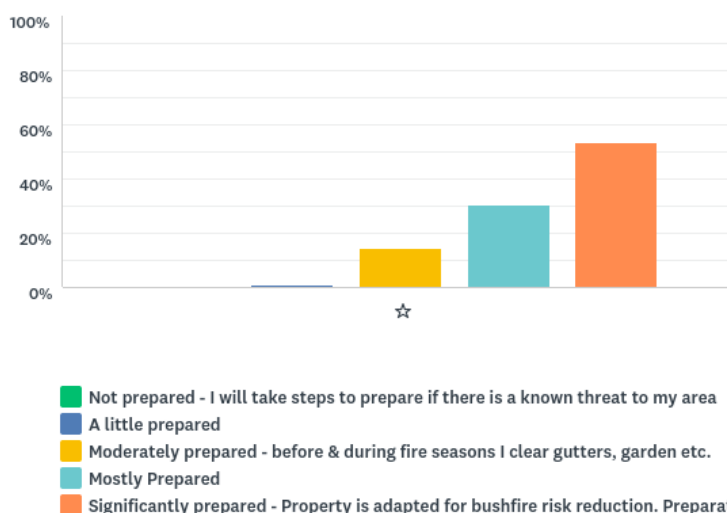






TABLE 7 Post-viewing rating of preparedness (Weighted ave on a scale of 0-5 = 3.43)

Q14 How would you rate your preparedness for bushfire? (Click under the statement closest to your situation)

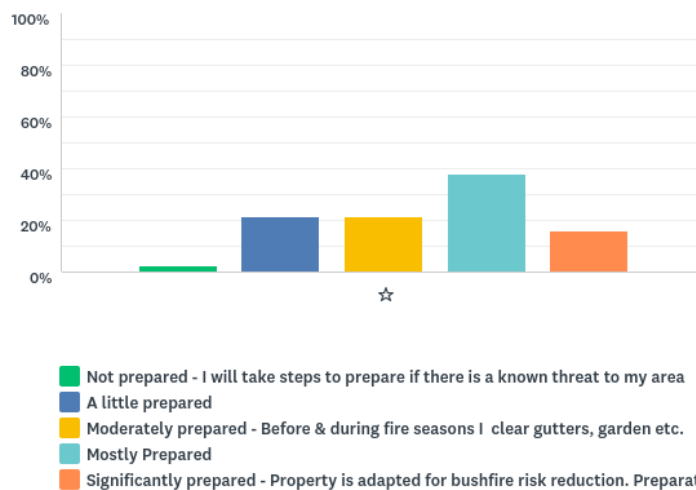
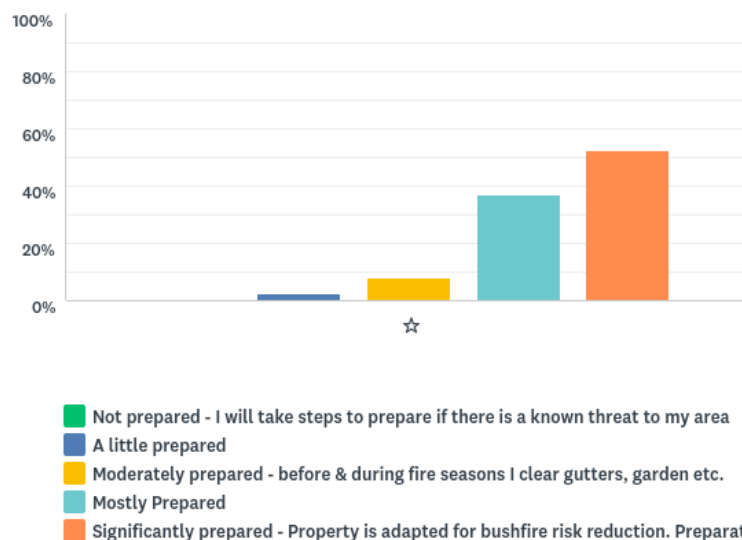


TABLE 8 Post-viewing rating of preferred level of preparedness (Weighted ave = 4.39)

Q17 What is your preferred level of preparedness for bushfire?





Subtle post-viewing changes are apparent in both directions and across the board. All respondents who were sure that their responses had shifted (12), i.e. that they had changed in preparedness and preferred preparedness, attributed changes in pre-to-post-viewing rankings to *viewing the film or subsequent related conversations*.

Whilst the relatively lower sample means that these results need to be considered conservatively, some interesting shifts were also observed in how people rated current preparedness.

**CURRENT LEVELS Pre->Post viewing**

- . The percentage of those rating their current level of preparation as ‘a little prepared’ was 13% pre-viewing. This rose to 22% post viewing.
- . The percentage who rated themselves moderately prepared dropped from 42% to 22% post viewing.

When considered together these two results may reflect a shift in understanding of preparedness i.e. what was once considered moderate is now minimal.

There was a 11% rise in people who consider themselves mostly prepared post viewing (from 27% to 38%). This may reflect increased preparation in the intervening period.

**PREFERRED LEVEL –**

- . There was a fall from 16% to 11% in those preferring to be moderately prepared or lower.
- . There was a rise from 30 to 37% in those who preferred to be mostly prepared

**TABLE 9 Pre-to-post viewing rating of preferred level of preparedness**

Before Viewing Fire Stories -Living With Risk						
Current Prep Level (86)	Not prepared	A little prepared	Moderately prepared	Mostly prepared	Significantly prepared	
	5.88	12.94	42.35	27.06	11.76	100%
Preferred Prep Level (84)	0	1.22	14.63	30.49	53.66	100%

AFTER VIEWING FIRE STORIES LIVING WITH RISK						
	Not prepared	A little prepared	Moderately prepared	Mostly prepared	Significantly prepared	
Current Prep Level (n37)	2.7	21.62	21.62	37.84	16.22	100%
Preferred Prep Level (n37)	0	2.63	7.89	36.84	52.63	100%



Spheres of Concern

Both before and after viewing the film respondents were asked to rate their level of consideration, when planning for bushfire, for **household, pets, neighbourhood, someone nearby who needs help, my street, community and wildlife.**

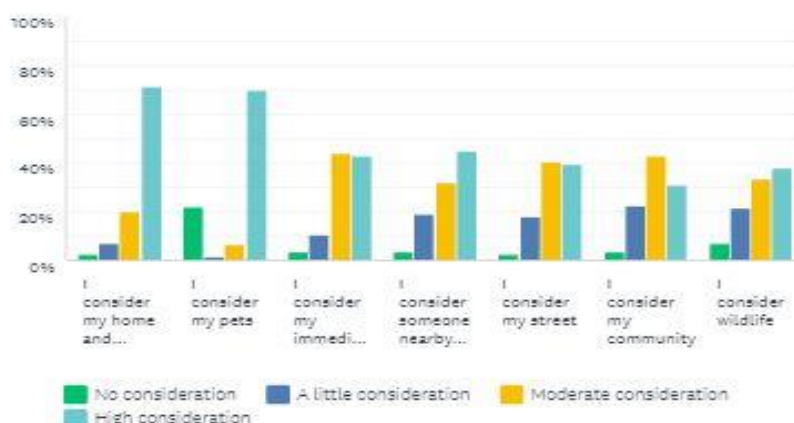
There was an ‘across the board’ reduction in the percentage of consideration registered in the lower two categories– **No consideration** and **A Little consideration** (total 145%– before viewing to 71% after viewing).

There was an increase in the percentage of consideration registered in the higher two categories– **Moderate consideration** and **High consideration** (total 558% before viewing to 629% after viewing). The most significant single rise (20%) was registered in High consideration of ‘Someone nearby who needs help’ The rest are more evenly distributed at a shift of up to 5%.

TABLE 10 Pre-viewing Spheres of Concern

When planning how I might deal with a fire...

Answered: 84 Skipped: 145



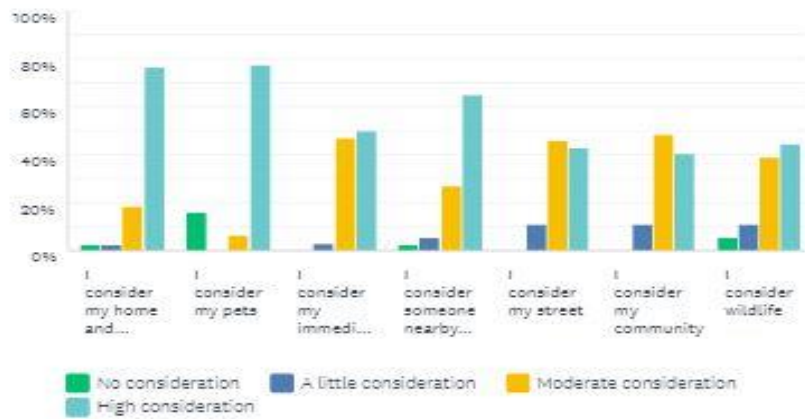
	NO CONSIDERATION	A LITTLE CONSIDERATION	MODERATE CONSIDERATION	HIGH CONSIDERATION	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
I consider my home and household	2.38% 2	7.14% 6	20.24% 17	71.43% 60	84
I consider my pets	22.08% 17	1.30% 1	6.49% 6	70.13% 64	77
I consider my immediate neighbourhood	3.57% 3	10.71% 9	44.05% 37	42.86% 36	84
I consider someone nearby who needs help	3.57% 3	19.05% 16	32.14% 27	45.24% 38	84
I consider my street	2.38% 2	17.86% 16	40.48% 34	39.29% 33	84
I consider my community	3.57% 3	22.62% 19	42.86% 36	30.95% 26	84
I consider wildlife	7.14% 6	21.43% 18	33.33% 28	38.10% 32	84



TABLE 11 Post-viewing Spheres of Concern

When planning how I might deal with a fire...

Answered: 38 Skipped: 2



	NO CONSIDERATION	A LITTLE CONSIDERATION	MODERATE CONSIDERATION	HIGH CONSIDERATION	TOTAL
I consider my home and household	2.63% 1	2.63% 1	18.42% 7	76.32% 29	38
I consider my pets	16.13% 6	0.00% 0	6.45% 2	77.42% 29	31
I consider my immediate neighbourhood	0.00% 0	2.78% 1	47.22% 18	50.00% 19	38
I consider someone nearby who needs help	2.70% 1	5.41% 2	27.03% 10	64.86% 25	38
I consider my street	0.00% 0	10.81% 4	45.95% 17	43.24% 17	38
I consider my community	0.00% 0	10.81% 4	48.65% 18	40.54% 16	38
I consider wildlife	5.56% 2	11.11% 4	38.89% 15	44.44% 17	38



## SECTION 4: Analysis

### 4.1 Survey Response Rate

The response rate to the invitations to undertake the previewing survey and as appropriate, to one of two post-viewing surveys, was strong. From a possible pool of email respondents (380)<sup>6</sup>, all invitations yielded over 30% response to each survey.

The initial response rate to the Invitation to participate was 60% (229/380 effective email addresses) comprised of 39% (89) General Community pre-viewing survey respondents and 61% (140) Recovery Community respondents. The latter group did not have to provide data beyond self-identification and opting in/out of an invitation to Post-viewing Survey. This decision was made in recognition of both the need to minimise further interrogation of the Recovery Community; and the fact that responses may not be comparable in view of the distinctive experiences of this group<sup>7</sup>.

The Recovery Community Post-viewing survey was completed by 51 people – 36% of the 140 RC respondents who registered for an invitation via the pre-viewing survey. Their responses were open ended. Clear trends emerged from their responses, summarised with analysis below.

Audience demography and Fire Stories engagement information was sought in the Pre-viewing Survey in view of the anticipated attrition between the Pre-viewing Survey and the General Community Post-viewing Survey.

Of the 89 possible respondents 39 (44%) completed the General Community Post-viewing survey. This number has provided consensus feedback on the film, as well as nuanced responses to impact on preparedness, summarised with analysis below.

### 4.2 Demography of General Community Respondents (n89 Pre-viewing Survey)

The cohort was more closely associated with the subject of the film than the community average. This is not unexpected as five of the six launch screening events were held at the Blue Mountains Community Theatre Hub at Springwood.

Most respondents lived closer (than average amongst the Blue Mountains population) to the location of the fires that were the subject of the film: 70% from the Mid Mountains (including 40% from Winmalee/Springwood/Yellow Rock). 15% of respondents had an association with the making of the film and 30% were involved, or had a close relative involved, with fire or other emergency services.

Respondents were older than the average population (95% were 40 or older) with slightly higher home ownership (85% compared to the Blue Mountains home ownership average of 75%).

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<sup>6</sup> Plus the unknown possibility of attracting a small additional number at the later launch events, for which no email addresses were required (unbooked)

<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding that **most** respondents are likely to have been affected by the fires to some extent, as their impact was pervasive across the Blue Mountains.



Most learned about the film via the Blue Mountains Gazette or via social media (brigades, plus social, fire and recovery groups) or by word of mouth. They attended to learn about living with the risk of fire (60%), general interest (44%) and because they were affected by the fires (32%)<sup>8</sup>

### 4.3 Community Engagement - Blue Mountains Community Living With Risk

Pre-viewing survey responses indicate that people value *Fire Stories* films for raising bushfire risk awareness. Responses to both post-viewing surveys corroborate its value for this purpose.

**Pre-viewing (89)** Of these early viewing respondents 28% had seen the first Fire Stories film *Fire Stories – A Lesson in Time*. Of 86 responses, 71% had encouraged another person to view either the first *Fire Stories* film or the current release.

Fifty-nine respondents explained why they had encouraged another to view a Fire Stories film. Text analysis of their explanations reveals a strong consensus within this cohort that Fire Stories films are useful in teaching bushfire awareness and the importance of being prepared – that this is an essential understanding for living in the Blue Mountains. The launch events demonstrate conversion of this perception into action - 18% attended because the film was recommended, and 16% wanted to bring someone.

**Post-viewing (39)** With two weeks of viewing the film, 95% of respondents reported both thinking about and speaking about the film with others – of these 75% had spoken about the film with people other than those attending with them. Of those detailing the nature of the conversation 19/22 referred to the need for bushfire preparation and awareness of risk (the remainder referred to the quality of the film). Whilst the overall numbers are not high the consistency of responses indicates a clear trend – respondents are promoting the film as a tool to promote bushfire awareness. When asked to rate the film on a scale of 0-5 for this purpose, the aggregate rating was 5 (maximum). 36 respondents referred to reasons for their rating including the visual impact and local relatable content, and inclusion of the aftermath. Some would have preferred more detail on the history of fire e.g. in the area and preparation details.

For respondents to all three surveys the role and value of the Fire Stories film project is assisting community members to be agents of bushfire awareness within their communities and households. This is consistent with the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2011<sup>9</sup> and the conceptual shift from the 'professionalisation of responsibility' within emergency management agencies to shared responsibility – including with communities and individuals.

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<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that this is reported by the remaining General Community cohort – ie those who *did not* report that they had been 'directly' affected by the fires.

<sup>9</sup> <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/2153/nationalstrategyfordisasterresilience.pdf>

*Disaster resilience is based on individuals taking their share of responsibility for preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters. They can do this by drawing on guidance, resources and policies of government and other sources such as community organisations. The disaster resilience of people and households is significantly increased by active planning and preparation for protecting life and property, based on an awareness of the threats relevant to their locality. It is also increased by knowing and being involved in local community disaster or emergency management arrangements, and for many being involved as a volunteer*

#### 4.4 Recovery Community Feedback

The extensive responses of the Recovery Community warrant close reading (Appendix 1). They provide feedback on the film, lessons for engagement on future projects, and their responses are rich with suggestions for awareness and engagement needs and strategies, informed by what respondents considered would have been useful to them confronting the 2013 fires.

Within the constraints of the film production process it would appear that *Fire Stories 2* was well received. Elements that were directly criticised by some were lauded by others (e.g. focus pets; exclusion of fires in the upper mountains; focus on impact of fire, versus spelling-out facts).

Whilst the sensitivity of the production of the film was commended by many, according to some respondents the emotional impact of the film on the audience could have been more sensitively handled at the special viewing for this group – tissues, and the availability of a counsellor were suggested by respondents; another found it ‘a special showing’. The localised concentration on Buena Vista Avenue was mentioned by many, some noting the inevitable constraints and others critical of the decision not to include more affected areas.

Feedback from the Recovery Community revealed that overall:

- . Viewing the film has been emotional for many, and at times traumatic;
- . Most respondents commended the film’s quality and sensitivity and the courage of those who participated;
- . Many would change nothing about the film;
- . Respondents questioned the localised concentration of subjects (particularly Buena Vista Avenue) and
- . Several questioned the project’s engagement with the community (e.g. not knowing about it, why more weren’t consulted).

**Insights to share** Respondents had policy suggestions arising from their experience:

- . That the SMS alert service be used when a fire is in a resident’s area, regardless of risk level;
- . That Council review the policy relating to development in areas of high risk;
- . That the efficacy of the new bushfire building regulations be examined in the light of the 2013 experience, as they may be imposing costs that may not be warranted.

Respondents provided many insights on engagement and better preparedness, and suggestions for passing on the insights gained from their experience of the 2013 bushfires to the community.

The proximity of the 2013 bushfire experience, in time and place, to the 2018 Blue Mountains community has presented opportunity for bushfire awareness education, which the *Fire Stories-Living With Risk* project has clearly harnessed in the making of *Fire Stories-Living With Risk*. The feedback of the Recovery Community indicates that the opportunity provides scope to further convert awareness into preparedness and by packaging and sharing insights of the kind that have been offered through the Feedback Survey responses.

**Recommendation** BMWHI and the project partners investigate the possibility of producing a companion resource to the film, comprising local survivor insights e.g.:



- better bushfire preparedness; and
- responding to a catastrophic bushfire emergency.

#### General Community Response to the Film

- Unprompted Responses to the film indicate that the film evoked **strong emotions** (e.g. *shocking, emotional, moving, and heart-warming*); that it was *well done, interesting and 'real'*. The most common category of responses (69) related to impact – common references to *informative, educational, awareness, helpful, inspiring, motivating*; and references to bushfire *preparation* are prevalent. The **film feedback** class of responses acknowledged the value of *real people real experiences real stories, and honest/vivid/graphic/epic/sobering* content.

### 4.5 General Community Responses to the Film

The 2018 film was shocking in its graphic depiction of the fire, moving in its depiction of the impact of the fire and recovery; and it was motivating, particularly for action towards readiness for bushfire. Bearing in mind the proximity of the audience to the film's subject it is possible that this response will be amplified in an audience further removed from the experience of the 2013 bushfires.

Unprompted responses to the 2018 film indicate:

- That the film evoked **strong emotions** (e.g. *shocking, emotional, moving, and heart-warming*);
- That depiction of the human impact of the fire was noted;
- That the audience considered that the film was *well done, interesting and 'real'*; The most common category of responses (69) related to impact of the film, and references such as *informative, educational, awareness, helpful, inspiring, motivating*; and bushfire *preparation* are prevalent. The respondents acknowledged the value of *real people real experiences real stories*. They used terms like *honest/vivid/graphic/epic/sobering*.

Most (89%) of respondents were surprised by elements in the film, most often (60%) by the behaviour of the catastrophic fire, followed by the community response and the implications for bushfire preparedness – including for the different circumstances depicted.

#### Self-ranking of bushfire preparedness

The General Community pre-viewing sample is comprised of 89 respondents, and the post-viewing sample is 39 respondents. The disparity in size and the relatively smaller sample post-viewing requires caution in the analysis of the results. It is worth noting that all who were able to be sure that their rating had changed (from pre-viewing rating to post-viewing rating) attributed the change to 'viewing the film', or a subsequent related conversation.

**Current Level, Pre and Post-viewing** Whilst the sample is small and the shifts are subtle it is possible that viewing the film has contributed to respondents reassessing their preparedness more conservatively: the percentage of those rating their current level of preparation as 'a little prepared' was 13% pre-viewing. This rose to 22% post viewing. The percentage who rated themselves 'moderately' prepared dropped from 42% to 22% post viewing.





When considered together these two results may reflect a shift in understanding of preparedness i.e. what was once considered moderate is now minimal.

There was a 11% rise in people who consider themselves mostly prepared post viewing (from 27 to 38%). This may reflect increased preparation in the intervening period.

**Preferred Level, Pre and Post-viewing** Whilst the sample is small and the shifts are subtle it is possible that viewing the film has contributed to some respondents' aspirations for preparedness rising. There was a fall from 16% to 11% in those 'preferring' to be moderately prepared or lower. There was a rise from 30% to 37% in those who preferred to be 'mostly prepared'.

### Spheres of Concern

Whilst the sample is small, and the shifts are subtle it is possible that viewing the film has contributed to some respondents raising their levels of concern overall for the listed spheres (household, pets, neighbourhood, someone nearby who needs help, my street, community and wildlife). There was an 'across the board' reduction in the percentage of consideration registered in the lower two categories– **No consideration** and **A Little consideration** (total 145%– before viewing to 71% after viewing). There was an increase in the percentage of consideration registered in the higher two categories– **Moderate consideration** and **High consideration** (total 558% before viewing to 629% after viewing).

The most significant single rise (20%) was registered in High consideration of 'Someone nearby who needs help' The rest are more evenly distributed at a shift of up to 5%.





## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Recovery Community Responses

TABLE A1-Q1: What did you think of the film?

<p>RESPONSE TO THE FILM</p> <p>ASSESSMENT OF THE FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Excellent</b> (10) film, interesting to hear the impact of the fires on the individuals</li> <li>- An excellent presentation. It accurately portrayed the images and emotions of the time</li> <li>- Excellent. Very professionally photographed and produced. A credit to all involved. All people living in the Blue Mountains should see it</li> <li>- <b>Extremely well</b> (2) put together. Realistic!</li> <li>- We thought it was extremely well done and covered the many aspects of living through a bushfire very well. The story line integrated well from family to family who were interviewed in the film.</li> <li>- Thought it was great. Well put together &amp; comprehensive.</li> <li>- I thought it was a <b>very good</b> (11) film, the content was <b>good</b> (13), and it was well produced.</li> <li>- Saw footage not previously seen and went away with much greater understanding of not only the impact on individuals directly affected but admiration for how the <b>community</b> (9) supported them.</li> <li>- Very good</li> <li>- It was informative</li> <li>- The film was well constructed and was <b>sensitive</b> (3) to its likely audience whilst being graphic enough and through its narration, to still provide advice through the words of the speakers.</li> <li>- Well done. Good stories representing a cross section of the community</li> <li>- Very good.</li> <li>- Very well (6) done. Professional (2). I liked the footage I assume was from personal phones. Also liked the quick short scenes. Made it clip along.</li> <li>- Very good</li> <li>- Very good. I was particularly taken with the amount of actual video footage and still photos shown while the fire was actually happening. It really captured the unfolding emergency well.</li> <li>- Really good, insightful raw emotional</li> <li>- It was well produced and interestingly told and quite accurate...</li> <li>- Very well made and thought-provoking. It revealed the personal stories of fire victims.</li> <li>- Well done, interesting.</li> <li>- It was very good, <i>but didn't cover all aspects of course of fire</i></li> <li>- Good</li> <li>- I'm sure most of those affected could also relate. Thank you.</li> <li>- Thank you for acknowledging the pets who were lost in the fire.</li> <li>- There was none of the usual hype that you see in a lot of documentaries you stuck to the facts and do quite well. As a firefighter I did not see the overview of the fire until I saw your movie my aspect of it was up close and personal. Thank you (3)</li> </ul>
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- . It was OK
- . Was OK - interesting to see that affected people differently and those who thought they'd dealt with it still were emotionally affected

+RECOVERY

- . I liked people's stories. After all the horror and sadness, it was good to hear from people who came through it.
- . Excellent (6) well-presented covering from the day to recovery and rebuilding
- . I thought it was very good- there was so much that could have been included but the film gave a good snapshot of the event and was well balanced between the day of the event and the **recovery** (6)
- . It was a good collection of stories from that day, and the recovery after. Well put together.
- . I liked the sometimes very raw interviews with the affected people. It was hard to watch but it also showed what it was like. It was great to see the film then turn around to a positive showing the resilience of people and the closeness of the Blue Mountains Community.

+ EMOTIONAL

- As a resident who lost their home, I found it very moving. It was good to have perspectives from people who lost their home and those who didn't, the Salvation Army and Red Cross, as it gave a variety of perspectives. The film gave a good account of the afternoon it happened, as I was at work and not in the area. Well done.
- Very emotional watching. It was hard to watch at some points as it brought back the feeling of what I felt during the fires. Even though I did not lose my house, it was a few ks away but the fear was there. I have also experienced the fires in Canberra. It was informative, an eye opener and an emotional viewing experience, a very worthwhile film to see.
- My wife and I thought that it was a great film and quite moving throughout. Though we own a home in the Winmalee suburb it was being rented out at the time but we were still very concerned for our tenant's safety and well-being. For us it was personal in the sense that my wife's best friend lost her home and all her possessions in the fire. In the end they decided not to rebuild on the site and moved out of the area.
- We thought the film was excellent, well made and very emotional. I guess being touched by the fires caused that to happen, though the people's stories were moving.
- I found it very upsetting & cried watching it because it brought back many memories of living through it. We had a young friend who was home alone on the day & she was on the phone to us saying the back verandah is on fire what do I do.... we said get out & come here. She arrived at our home with the clothes she was wearing & nothing else. Her home was burnt down. I remained hyper vigilant for a few years, whenever I heard a siren or helicopter or smelled smoke. Having said that, I thought the film was a good account of what happened
- It was very moving. It reminded me of that day when people close to me lost so much and brought me to tears. I saw several people I know. The production values were high. The abiding message of the importance of community was uplifting.
- Very well produced. I had a fair amount of trepidation in seeing the film as thought/ knew it would stir up vivid feelings and memories, and naturally it did. I shed a few quiet tears initially - but was super grateful that it quickly moved from some traumatic images to then focusing on people's lived experiences and shared stories of recovery, and community. Very impressed by this sensitivity



shown. Even had a couple of laughs later on.

- It was very poignant and evoked many memories. Some of which I would rather not have revisited - but that is my problem

+ APPRECIATED THE HUMOUROUS ELEMENT

- There was a good balance of humour and seriousness.
- Including a little bit of humour (between husband and wife) lightened the mood a bit.

+ COMMUNITY

- I loved the film and I loved the way it was made so sensitively, especially the way it portrayed the different experiences of what people went through and how it's made people think of what they should do to prepare should it ever happen again but most of all I loved seeing what an amazing community we are blessed to live in
- We were also proud of our church (Springwood Baptist Church) which opened it's heart and it's buildings to the Salvation Army's disaster recovery shop.

+ INSIGHT INTO THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- It was really good! A good balance between what it felt like on the day, people's stories and then what to do next time. The feelings of that day were brought back once again. I think that it really did hit the audience about what it was like.
- A very well put together film capturing the essence of what took place on the day, how residents coped then and now.
- it was great. It showcased the events well and showed the emotional side of the event, which people don't often understand. I like it showed the emotional hardship for those who saved their home too.

**LESSONS FROM THE FILM**

- Very well done. The images from actually inside the fire were powerful - and incredibly frightening. It made me even more aware of the need to prepare as much as possible but to leave if given the choice.
- Was very different from the first, more about people than fire facts. Impact for preparedness much stronger. Great footage and superb storytelling
- Excellent! Very real, poignant and realistic about our choice to live in a high risk area and the very real likelihood of it all happening again.
- Everyone has hopefully learned much and will remember to share their lessons with new and old residents alike.
- Great. I have grown up in the mountains... You have brought out some really important themes that need to be communicated to people, particularly those who have recently moved to the mountains. These include the need to do basic preventative maintenance, that there are only a limited number of volunteers/ vehicles and that every house can't be saved, the need to take responsibility for your own home, BAL ratings, planning to evacuate, renovating with intentional thought for fire risk, etc. The visuals of being inside a house with the sparks flying and smoke coming in was very graphic. I appreciated that the focus was on the '**people impact**' of the fires, as much as loss of property. ... X worked in police work and seen some horrific stuff in (their) work,



but had never before experienced the level of trauma that (they) went through on that day.

- It provided a very good insight into the real risks people face in our area, how quickly a fire can spread, how in some areas escape routes can be easily cut off and the consequences of a fire occurring when no one is home. The short answer: it was a very good film.
- ...I'm sure people will leave and know that disasters do happen and they can happen to anyone. Preparedness is an important key.

**EMOTIONAL WITHOUT ACCOMPANYING POSITIVE RESPONSE**

- It was a grim reminder of what we had been through.
- It was quite emotional to see the footage of the fire again and renew the feelings it provoked. Really moving to hear affected people speaking about their recovery.
- Very interesting but made me sad. Not particularly informative. No mention at all of the role of Phil Koperberg and his community meetings which were a lifeline to us afterwards. Highly selective in giving credit to only a couple of the organizations which provided assistance.

**WOULD LIKE TO HAVE SEEN...**

- Very good would like to have seen more around Lower end of Yellow Rock
- ... The person ... wasn't the most appropriate person to spend so much time on... (comment removed to protect identities)
- ...No mention at all of the role of Phil Koperberg and his community meetings which were a lifeline to us afterwards. Highly selective in giving credit to only a couple of the organizations which provided assistance.
- I think the film should be the 'end' of the 2013 fires.



TABLE A1-Q2: What, if anything, would you change

<p>NO CHANGE (17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absolutely nothing.</li> <li>- Nothing. (5)</li> <li>- Nil. (2)</li> <li>- Nothing that I could think of.</li> <li>- Nothing to be honest.</li> <li>- Personally I wouldn't.</li> <li>- Thought it was fine as is.</li> <li>- I am not sure I would change anything.</li> <li>- Nothing necessarily. Its length was good and content very good.</li> <li>- Nothing at all! It was a film that kept your attention all the way through it and delivered an important safety message to the community while having a couple of light-hearted moments as well!</li> <li>- No, the messages in the film came across well. From the first views of the fires through the strategic management of the areas, to the clearing up.</li> <li>- In this Film I would change nothing it was quite well done.</li> <li>- Nothing. It covered all angles including how people coped and how they are now. I have watched the rebuilding over the years and the community does feel more whole as the houses have emerged and families have returned, even if they are not the same families.</li> </ul>
<p>SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was no footage about the hundreds of schoolchildren affected when the schools were locked down.</li> <li>- There were so many stories not touched on like the schools in lockdown and amazing stories of the children being walked to safety from St Thomas and the teacher who did that had lost their homes also those trapped at St Columbas.</li> <li>- Possibly the movement of school children from St Thomas's, but I realise not everything could be covered.</li> <li>- Obviously it's impossible to include a huge variety of people's experiences, but I was surprised that the experience of the St Thomas or St Columba's students and teachers (especially the Principal who lost his home) wasn't included.</li> </ul>
<p>MORE INTERVIEWS/STORIES/CIRCUMSTANCES/LOCATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would have liked to see maybe more personal stories but not sure how that would have fitted in.</li> <li>- I felt it could have taken a wider view of all streets impacted. It was heavily focused on Buena Vista.</li> <li>- A wider focus rather than most of the detail being on one road, in this case Buena Vista, and more naming other roads where many houses were lost or affected eg Heather Glen, Singles Ridge Road.</li> <li>- As a resident who lost their home, I was not aware of the film until a few weeks ago. Those I have spoken to in my street were not aware of the film being made, despite our street losing more than half - 65% of homes (17 of 26 homes). I understand that everyone could not be part of the film, however I would have sought input from each street to determine what to include, to create a more balanced representation of areas of Yellow Rock, rather than an over representation of</li> </ul>



Buena Vista Road..

- Maybe getting more people to tell their stories.
- If I had to change something, I think I would have liked to hear a few more different stories from other survivors instead of just that small handful."
- Too many of the same people, there were many others that also went through the bushfires.
- All the focus was on two areas. My street where 5 homes were lost and another lot damaged was not even mentioned, which surprised me. It seems to me that in the time available you can concentrate on the people and their stories OR look at precautions, building costs and under insurance etc but not both. This film was nice but didn't really explore anything useful.
- The interviews were mostly from Buena Vista Av. It would have been good to hear from other streets.

#### +EVACUATION CENTRE

- Have a slightly wider variety of people interviewed and maybe also talk about the concern that was rife amongst people at the Springwood Country Club evacuation centre. People didn't know what had happened to their homes or their loved ones. Was something I don't want to experience again.
- Springwood Golf Club was also an evacuation centre... many Yellow Rock residents spent the night there."

#### OTHER FIRES

- Leave the Mt Victoria footage out of it.
- It was unfortunate that the film did not cover the State Mine Fire and the Mt York Rd Fire. These fires were left out of the film despite the huge size of the state mine fire and the fact that 10 houses were destroyed at Mt Victoria.

#### PETS

- What hit me the most was the fact that people's pets can be trapped with no provision for them to be rescued. This would be the most devastating thing for me: the thought of my pet or my neighbour's burning to death and not being able to do anything to prevent it and your film made it clear many animals died this way. I don't know if a film such as yours can do much to promote some sort of arrangement amongst neighbours whereby if a fire is immanent and the house owners are absent that pets can be rescued by neighbours. If a pet is inside the house I would be reluctant to break a window to get in because that would mean the house would almost certainly go up in flames. However, if an arrangement between neighbours existed and a key exchanged, the animals could be evacuated by neighbours.
- I appreciate that people love animals like their own children, but loss of life for people and pets are two different things. I guess this was only one person's opinion.
- Less emphasis on pets with problems. Yes I know people love their pets but we didn't need to hear about the pets' medical and dietary issues in such detail





+ One extensive, wide-ranging response

1. A slight change in demographic mix. eg Featuring a family as part of the mix would have been good, including working through the recovery process with school-aged children. Bring out the issues re children being stuck at school for hours and parents being scared about the safety of their kids. Some kids were in the midst of HSC exams at the time and lost their homes;
2. Intentionally highlight the bushfire safety plan pack;
3. The kit needed to 'stay and defend' including hat, boots, flannelette shirt, water, goggles, a basic dust mask for breathing, torch, water bottles, eye drops, asthma medication if necessary. Having that stuff in a metal box, ready to go. (my sister in law mentioned that she even had eye lashes singed; it wasn't just breathing issues but also smoke and heat affecting people's eyes. My dad used to cover his face with cloth nappies when he was fire-fighting)
4. A little more on the need for water tanks, hoses, sprinkler systems, metal buckets and generators, including the need to run the generator and water pump on a regular basis. One guy in Yellow Rock who stayed/ defended, had only serviced his pump that morning. Otherwise, the pump wouldn't have started.
5. One thing that wasn't acknowledged was that at least one Winmalee (fire fighter-name supplied) lost his rental home (and his pets...) - while he was defending the homes of other people. The RFS guys not only live in the area but also selflessly defend the area, even though that may mean they don't get home.
6. It would be good to highlight the level of temperature that was experienced as the fire front. One friend commented that the most likely reason their house went was due to float glass in their windows shattering due to the sheer heat. Other people commented that they couldn't return to their homes for an extended period of time, as plastic items, including light switches and power points, had melted in the houses.

RANGE OF SUGGESTIONS

- Maybe talk about the actual trauma and recovery;
- Interviewing how others felt over that week that lived in the area. Why did some stay & why did others leave?
- Let audience know why people went to Yellow Rock Lookout ie: Fire had burnt through 4 weeks prior - all vegetation had been burnt. Safe zone Springwood Golf Club was also an evacuation centre... many Yellow Rock residents spent the night there;
- Would have liked some mapping showing the path of the fire and the timeframe;
- More footage of the actual fire - if there is any;
- More facts about what happened;
- I would have been interested to see how people were able to rebuild - maybe a case study;

+ DISAGREE WITH SOME CONTENT

- Remove the role of... (identifying detail removed from report but noted);
- X was very prominent ...gave the impression... (identifying detail removed from report but noted).

**FIRE FIGHTER** More focus on the fire fighters

- I know NSW Fire and Rescue were first on arrival at the bushfires and played a very big part. I would have liked to see them recognized in the film;



- Also the bushfire brigade was not really represented except for a few shots of tankers. I would like to have heard from the Bushfire Fighters, who risk their lives EVERYTIME there is a bushfire. How did this fire impact on them? How do they cope with the risk they face each time they attend a fire?
- Perhaps more footage of the fires itself. Perhaps a few stories from the perspective of volunteer bush firefighters;
- More emphasis on the ability (or rather inability) of the emergency services to help all the people who needed help during the crisis in Winmalee and Yellow Rock. This was especially important in this fire which arose and developed really quickly without warning and whilst resources were miles away in the Upper Blue Mountains fighting existing fires there;
- Who counselled and supported the bushfire fighters. The animosity and dislike of the RFS immediately post this fire was not mentioned. I think it should have been just to show the negativity that arises from disasters and again how this was dealt with by not just the residents but the Bushfire fighters. I know the feeling died a natural death but it was a real and very difficult time for the people in their yellows;
- I understand there is a future documentary planned more related to the aspects of what the volunteer firefighters do during the fires and how they operate That sounds like a good idea.

#### FILM ENGAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- Just need to help as many people see it as possible;
- Only suggestion would be to do some 10 to 15 minute mini-films that can be shown at community event, presentations etc.



TABLE A1-Q3: Do you have suggestions for future projects to increase bushfire awareness in the Blue Mountains?

FIRE STORIES
<p>+ INCREASE AUDIENCE (9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Play the film to a wide audience;</li> <li>– Also, mass media - perhaps try to get Sunday Night or 60 minutes to devote an evening to the film;</li> <li>– More of this – it was good;</li> <li>– Show this movie!!</li> <li>– Community needs to be more actively engaged in the showing of the film so more people see it;</li> <li>– Maybe the cinemas in the Blue Mountains could include the videos in one week of their programmes, as an added item in the week's show. No charge would be made but a suggested donation to the Emergency Services. A chat with the cinema managers ought to get agreement and it ought to be showed in the lead up to the summer season: before fires start to erupt;</li> <li>– Good to show this film in as many places as possible so people can have a reality check. I came to the Blue Mts from Warrandyte in Vic &amp; went through the Kinglake fires (from a distance) but had to evacuate twice. I found attitudes a bit complacent here when I arrived in Spring 2013. But after the fire at Winmalee everyone in my street attended to their trees &amp; the power cos did checks of the powerlines so a lot of preparation has been done which is comforting;</li> <li>– It would be good if you could get this film and the 1958 doco onto national television. This isn't just an education project for the Mountains. It's a story that is replicated each time there is a fire in Australia.</li> </ul> <p>+VARIATION /OTHER FILM PROJECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– (community engagement worker) ... we are always looking for new &amp; better ways of engaging with the community, getting the message across and seeing change. Residents don't have time to sit and watch a one hour film at one of normal contacts, however a 10 to 15 minutes short film on preparedness would be ideal. A cut down version of Fire Stores II would be ideal;</li> <li>– Maybe a five minute documentary of sorts to be shown prior to all major movies held at the cinemas in the mountains;</li> <li>– Even short films that explore various scenarios would go a long way to helping educate communities that ultimately still aren't well prepared for emergencies, even though they are good at rallying together during or after;</li> <li>– Another film maybe showing common mistakes/ hazards increasing bushfire risk;</li> <li>– The film highlighted the point about having a plan. I would like to see a film or project that actually presents several fire plans that people can adopt... (other comment removed but noted);</li> <li>– Maybe show more footage and show how quickly the fire moved on a map with a timeline - to let people know that Oasis at Yellow Rock is a last resort safe place and other safe places at other spots in the mountains;</li> <li>– 2/3 Top Notch Video/ Jason Webster shot footage of the 1994 fire.  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zW9TPoF620">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zW9TPoF620</a> Have you collaborated with Jason re his footage? He provides footage for some Sydney news media outlets;</li> </ul>



- Another fire stories film that explores how various types of people, family units, elderly, non-english speaking etc, etc could be a fantastic resource for local and Australian wide audiences;
- Keep the footage factual, otherwise it can distort history;
- I look forward to and hope you are able to secure funding to make the second film about the firefighters that fought hard to save lives and property on that day.

OTHER STRATEGIES/NEEDS

- 3/3 Winmalee RFS's idea of getting into the **shopping centre** and being 'seen' in the marketplace is a really important way of doing community education. They're not hiding in their fire stations and waiting for people to come to them;
- Bushfire awareness stalls set up at the **shops**;
- I'm not an experienced personally but I would probably hold more information seminars and even have our Rfs people and other experienced organisations have info stalls at local **shopping centres**;
- Community get togethers are great;
- Red Cross run the Pillowcase Project when funds are available for primary schoolchildren. It has been really useful in promoting family conversations on preparedness. It would be really beneficial to be able to run this program or something similar regularly;
- Letter drops with information;
- Text service as soon as there's a fire in the area whether it's high risk or not.

(STRATEGIES PLUS MESSAGES)

- We feel that more education in schools about bushfire preparations would mean that children would encourage their parents to perform bushfire safety projects around the home and the children would grow up to be much better "firewise" adults as well. If parents feel their children are concerned for their safety, the parents are more likely to do something positive about change. As we live in a bushfire prone area, we feel the message should be about a year round attitude to fire safety and not something we only think about before the "bushfire season". Winter jobs of pushing back scrub and overhanging branches near homes and sheds are important factors in being ready for the summer months;
- Yes. I am constantly interested in not just prevention factors but also in the factors that made individual houses more of a risk while others were saved. What saved particular houses? We know that having clean rooves, gutters and neat gardens help but as the film showed if you weren't home then you couldn't do much. Was particular vegetation a help or a hindrance, eg large trees. Was it the design of the houses themselves? Very fierce fires and crazy winds may not make any strategies particularly useful but people will want to blame themselves if there was something they could have done;
- How about more strategies for preserving memories. Strategies for supporting victims, survivors, firefighters and support serves? How soon should you leave? Work through the fire plan (for those who work, are at home, have pets, disabled or elderly). More on how to assess your insurance requirements.



MESSAGES NEEDED

- Spelling out the processes about staying, going and where to take refuge in the case of fires in the mountains;
- I still don't know where we are to evacuate to in Winmalee. There was talk of Summerhayes but then I heard no?? Also, the fact that landlines don't work, power is off & how to combat that by having a battery powered radio so you can listen to updates. I had to sit in my car to hear updates but if you in didn't have a car how would you know what was happening;
- Until hearing one of the RFS speakers talk on the day, I wasn't aware that eg. RFS members are able to assist some members of the community (eg. Elderly or invalid) in bushfire preparedness around the home. I feel that this would be a great thing to promote, say in the Gazette, in the 2 or 3 months leading up to the fire season. It would provide greater peace of mind to many, and I'm sure including those family members or friends who may live interstate or are unable to be close enough to assist;
- Awareness of growth of shrubbery, and green growth, putting houses and buildings at risk;
- A summary of tips from those who lost their homes (or homes survived) in the fires I.e how to prepare homes, what to pack for evacuation;
- Yes. How can my wife and I retrofit our home to make it more fire resistant? I think some more practical hints on what we can do for ourselves as part of our regular home maintenance program;
- The packs provided on the day are a good reminder to keep vigilant. The suggestion to have a bag packed is a good one; we had this but we were not at home. I suggest having a bag with spare clothes etc. at a friend or relative's house. Building materials that don't burn and at least give a family time to get out;
- Specific measures to prepare E.g. Gutter clearing on a regular basis of every 3 months at the least. Newcomers to this area need specific things to do e.g. Remove flammable curtains from windows and close all windows and blinds, wet towels at base of doors to outside, and when fire is near wear a handbag across the body with mobile phone, charger, credit cards, medications etc. ;
- People need to always beware of the risk in the Mountains;
- Regarding Yellow Rock No safe zone Available One road in & Out;
- When people purchase a dwelling or land in the Blue Mountains they should be made aware of the risk of bushfire. They need to be made aware that each village has a Rural Fire Brigade which they need to make themselves familiar with to get a plethora of information about living with the risk of bushfire and being prepared.

+ CHALLENGE

- We have been involved in the Bushfire Awareness days in our local area and I think there are people that are interested in preparing for the fire season and there are people that are just not interested, and unfortunately when it all goes haywire, they are the ones that panic, are not prepared and unfortunately lose their homes. I really think they won't come to meetings, or awareness days, as they think they may get roped into doing something!

+ POLICY

- Possibly looking at the sort of areas which are most at risk. New houses are going up at the top of ridges very close to the bush and where westerly/north westerly winds are most likely to drive a fire. There is not much new land available for development but it is happening in most inappropriate places.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I had no idea what precautions, if any had been taken by any of the people who lost their homes, so in that sense it was not really helpful. On the day a number of the homes lost were less than 12 months old and had been built to the new and very expensive standards, but they were destroyed just as completely. We have no idea what is the use of these extra and expensive building requirements as they did not protect the homes in question, This is vital information as the reason most people found themselves underinsured was that the new building codes had been introduced just a year before the fire, so residents had not caught up with the new costs. No one had been warned by Council. Nothing was said about whether this has been addressed by Council or State government.</li> </ul>
ENOUGH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is so much now between RFS and Emergency services.</li> </ul>
TARGET AUDIENCE FOR FILM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I would say I am bushfire aware and having been at home during this fire as it passed all around and over us and received no help from the RFS or other emergency personnel during the fire. For me personally I learnt nothing to make me more bushfire aware from watching this film. The film should be targeted at an audience who has not experienced a bushfire, rather than one that was intimately involved in it. Apart from the advice from the pet owner and the Pre-School principal, as to what to put in a carry-out bag, most of the advice was very general and could be more specific</li> </ul>
NO (5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not at this time.</li> <li>- None that I can think of.</li> <li>- No (3)</li> </ul>



TABLE A1-Q4: General Comments

COMMENDATION (35/41)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Great awareness raising &amp; thank you</li> <li>- Well done on the whole show.</li> <li>- Congratulations on doing a timely community service.</li> <li>- Was of good quality</li> <li>- Good work</li> <li>- A big thank you to all the people that contributed to the film, it must of been hard to re-live the experience.</li> <li>- Liked how the narrative switched back and forth to individuals. Admirably edited.</li> <li>- Congratulations on a great documentary. I would like to see it on free to view TV to make all Sydney-siders aware of the fragility of life in living in or near to the bush.</li> <li>- I also watched the Leura fire film and that, too, was an excellent account of the fires, the problem with water and equipment and the aftermath. This film too could be shown at the cinemas.</li> <li>- Congratulations to all of you who were involved in the making of this documentary. Your dedication to this project has been rewarded in your production of a film that has been so well received by those who have seen it and will continue to be seen as relevant for many years to come. We would like to especially thank and congratulate Laura Zusters for her zest in getting the story right and for her professionalism at all times. Thank you all!</li> <li>- <b>Congratulations</b> to those that took part, it must have been extremely traumatic</li> <li>- <b>Thankyou</b> for making it and to those who agreed to be interviewed</li> <li>- <b>I liked the film as it was</b> and the time frame was just right for viewing.</li> <li>- <b>Thank you</b> for sharing it</li> <li>- Thought it was <b>terrific and well worth seeing- thank you</b> for the opportunity</li> <li>- It was a <b>great film</b> which is a credit to the film producers and the resilient folk who "starred" in it! <b>Bravo!</b></li> <li>- <b>Thank you</b> for all the work that everyone involved put into the production.</li> <li>- Laura did a <b>great job</b> piecing all of the film together.</li> <li>- It was a <b>professional production</b> which would interest people who weren't directly involved.</li> <li>- <b>Congratulations</b> to Laura Zusters on a job well done.</li> <li>- it was <b>really good</b>.</li> <li>- A really <b>valuable</b> resource. <b>Thanks</b> for making it.</li> <li>- <b>Just well done and thankyou</b> again for the producer's sensivity, and for not over dramatising or sensationalising any aspects of the whole experience. Also a debt of <b>gratitude to those who participated</b>, with courage and honesty."</li> <li>- It is a great asset to the local community. It would be worth pressing the film be shown on the ABC</li> </ul>

to a national audience

- A timely reminder of the need to prepare.
- Well put together
- It was a special showing Well done
- It was very well done!
- Having been involved in this project, I appreciate that my reasons and motives for being involved were conveyed in the right way in the film and I am thankful for the professional production that we ultimately saw on the screen.

+RECOGNISING 'SURVIVOR GUILT'

- **Well done. Thank you.** It made the very accurate observation that people generally go above and beyond to help each other in situations. I also liked that one of the stories involved the phenomena of survivor guilt and the changed nature of neighbourhoods post fires.
- It was interesting to hear the person who didn't lose her house felt guilty about that I've heard this was a common thing amongst those whose houses were saved

+EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF VIEWING (2)

- **Very well done.** May be offer **tissues at the door** going in and out. Some people were very stressed. I was a bit shocked at how graphic it was but wouldn't delete anything. I will look at it again when I can face it. In the meantime: **thank you** for acknowledging what people experienced.
- Good idea having a session for the local residents with speakers beforehand. As parts of the film were confronting, I would have **arranged for counsellors** to be on hand to provide support and I would have announced that there were counsellors there to talk to afterwards, if seeing the film raised issues for people. This was done at Winmalee High School when they ran the play about the bushfire.

+PERSONAL INSIGHTS re TRAUMA

- Finally - I just want to say: **Great Work! and Thank you!** I've grown up experiencing some level of secondary trauma, as (family of fire fighter). One of my earliest memories was of being evacuated during the 1968 fires. My dad came close to losing his life, fire-fighting in 1977. The messages you bring in this film are critical: that living in this beautiful area comes with a risk. It's not a risk that can be ignored.
- Preceding content from respondent
  - . I don't think people realise not only the level of trauma experienced by people in the streets affected, but also the level of trauma which affected the community as a whole, including the impact on kids and young adults. I grew up in ...(removed), living through the 1968 and 1977 fires. My late dad was a life member of ...(removed) RFS, so I grew up with the pager going off. I moved to Hazelbrook in 1989. Two of my brothers defended their homes in Yellow Rock in 2013, as they were on night shift. A number of my friends lost their homes in Winmalee on that day.
  - . There are people who now live outside the mountains - but who grew up in Springwood/ Winmalee - who were also profoundly affected by the fire. One person who has written a number of articles is Zita Fogarty (whose dad was a GP in Springwood for many years) but who now lives in Sydney. <https://zafogarty.wordpress.com/2018/06/17/blue-mountains-inferno/>





<p>. Neither do many people realise that the route that the 2013 fire took, was similar to that of the 1968 fire, which also went down the gully behind Birdwood Avenue. ... (X) made a comment after surviving the onslaught of fire while firefighting in Thompson Ave (off Linksvie Ave) in 1977: "if a fire comes down the Grose and we don't stop it at the (St Columbas) College gates, it will jump Hawkesbury Road and you won't stop it before it gets to the Nepean River".</p>
<p>OBSERVATIONS-LEAVING/INSURANCE (3)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The idea of leaving early, if there is a warning of imminent bushfires, seems to be an accepted viewpoint by the majority of survivors - thank goodness;</li> <li>- The need to be aware of costs involved prior to rebuilding - clearing your block etc were not mentioned. In a smaller event these things are not covered by government. Congratulations on your film;</li> <li>- We defended our home (with gutters cleared as usual) in Heather Glen Road with our fire pump and fire hoses using our swimming pool water, though every house around us was burned down. Though having lived on Blue Mountains through bushfires since 1960, we were forcibly evacuated (safety measure I agree) but after leaving there was fire in all our sheds and house next door.</li> </ul>
<p>ENGAGEMENT/PROMOTION</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many people seemed to think it was purely an educational, informative film. I think the promotion of it probably didn't entice people to attend;</li> <li>- Not what I expected;</li> <li>- The film may not make that much sense to those in the future with no fire experiences. Some of the scenes, although appreciated by the audiences, may have others wondering.</li> </ul>
<p>OTHER STORIES (1)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was the story of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. the lady who was woken up by a telephone by a caring work mate. When she open up the curtains the fire was in her yard;</li> <li>. The mother who bought some chocolate biscuits (Tim Tams) and decided she would put them in her fridge. When she arrived home, she found her daughter in the house with ear plugs listening to music and curtains closed. Their house was destroy by fire, but they were safe;</li> <li>. The wife who never expected to see her husband again;</li> <li>. We had 3 clients houses burnt down. Another clients house was saved.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>NO COMMENT (2)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not that I can think of at the moment</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>



## Appendix 2: General Community Responses

TABLE A2-(i): Three words that best capture your response to the film

37 respondents made 127 responses

<b>Emotional Response</b> 37
<p>Moving (8)                  Scary/frightening (4)                  Shocked, unbelievable damage amazing (4)                  Personal/heart-warming human (8)                  Emotional (7)                  Sad (2)                  Worried for others (1)                  Grateful (1)</p>
<b>Impact</b> 69
<p>Informative / educational /learned/revelation (16)                  New level of awareness/enlightening / wakeup (5)                  Inspired inspiring illuminating, motivated/motivating (6)                  Insightful (3)                  Thought provoking (4)                  Helpful, relevant (5)                  Realisation, reality of BM, Real people, Real stories Real experiences (7)                  Prepare/inspires preparation/prevention/plan/who is where? Need to act, readiness conversations (9)                  Participate, commitment, determination, caution, humility (6)                  Unexpected/Sudden/rapid/quick (onset and movement of fire) (6)                  Community - spirit, sense of, not alone (7)</p>
<b>Film Feedback</b> 26
<p>Film – excellent, impressed re capturing key elements, good, well done, professional (9)                  Interesting, engaging, fascinating (7)                  Captured well 3 Some stories captured (1)                  Honest/vivid/graphic/epic /sobering/very real (6)</p>



TABLE A2-(ii): What, if anything, surprised you

37 respondents made 67 responses

<b>Fire behaviour - 20</b>	
<p>How quickly conditions can change;                  Lack of time to leave or prepare to defend;                  Fire speed;                  How quickly it happened;                  How fast the fire came;                  Speed of progress of fire;                  How quickly fire risk can escalate;                  The ferocity of the wind;                  The strength and speed of the fire;                  The speed of the fire and the ferociousness of the ember;                  Fire heat;                  The fire - so ferocious;                  The smoke and sky during the fire;                  Intensity of flames;                  Fire scenes;                  Fire winds generated;                  Footage of ember attack and how intense it was;                  The visuals of being caught in the middle of the fire - even though I knew theoretically what it's like, that knowledge didn't have the impact as seeing and hearing;                  The detail of what took place during and after the fire;                  The amount of devastation;                  Proximity of fire to my house.</p>	
<b>Readiness Related</b>	<b>9</b>
<p>Lack of readiness;                  That a lot of people were caught unaware;                  Preparation for pet care, not just grabbing the pet;                  Grab bag for you; for your pet;                  Importance of wearing natural fibre clothing;                  The old man who though he could save his house with a hose;                  How hard it can be to know if you should go or stay;                  Having sprinklers isn't enough unless you can use them;                  Helplessness even when at home.</p>	
<b>Community/Resilience/Priority 14</b>	
<p>Community strength;                  The resilience of the people affected;                  Strength of individuals;                  How everyone banded together;                  The resilience of the people greatly affected by the fires really came through;</p>	



<p>The response from the communist was fantastic;                  The spirit of the people who lost their homes;                  The way the community rallied around and helped each other;                  The extent of the community response and generosity;                  Community generosity post event;                  How residents change their ideas about what is important;                  The effect on people as to what is important;                  Sustained effort to support people impacted eg meals for 2yrs;                  The immediate pop-up service of the Salvation Army;</p>
<p><b>Individual circumstances 4</b></p>
<p>The woman who had to turn back and leave her son and dog;                  The unique needs of different people;                  The kindergarten;                  The re-school teacher/s bravery and leadership;                  The bravery of the child care worker that the little kids were stuck in;                  The middle of the fire.</p>
<p><b>Impact on people 3</b></p>
<p>Surprised that no one died or was even much injured;                  The degree of lingering bewilderment by those whose home survived;                  Sense of loss associated with losing things like recipes, tobacco box.</p>
<p><b>Film Related 6</b></p>
<p>Very good interviews (many were funny which was surprising given the subject matter);                  Better produced than I expected (as done in a short time frame);                  the range of responses from the audience;                  Nothing about Mt VIC situation;                  Powerful interviews;                  Surprised that everyone was very comfortable talking about what happened;                  Personal stories that those affected were willing to share;</p>
<p><b>No Surprise</b></p>
<p>Nothing really;                  Nothing, really. I was there;                  Nothing;                  Nothing.</p>



TABLE A2-(iii): What have you discussed with others since viewing FS2

<p><b>PREPARATION/FIRE PLAN</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How we can be better prepared;</li> <li>- The need for preparation, my own bushfire plan;</li> <li>- Need a fire plan!</li> <li>- Lack of insurance; how powerful it is;</li> <li>- Fire safety;</li> <li>- Fire risk; my own response;</li> <li>- Having a family comms plan;</li> <li>- Preparation and planning for a fire;</li> <li>- Need for preparation;</li> <li>- the need for preparation;</li> <li>- Preparation that I should do, and the loss of pets, and how close the fire approached properties and houses;</li> <li>- Reminder of what can happen/being ready;</li> <li>- The need for awareness of the dangers;</li> <li>- Being prepared if you cannot leave;</li> <li>- Community preparedness programs;</li> <li>- The need to keep preparing...don't give up;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>THE FILM</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How good it was!</li> <li>- Just how well the film was made and how relevant and interesting it was;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>GENERAL ENGAGEMENT</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All of it;</li> <li>- Community support, lack of time;</li> <li>- The speed and intensity of the fire. The immensity of losing everything. The lack of insurance. The amazing community spirit;</li> </ul>



TABLE A2-(iv): Why have you recommended the film to others?

<b>BLUE MOUNTAINS RESIDENTS NEED BE AWARE (OF BUSHFIRE RISK)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The fact that we are all "living with risk" in the Blue Mountains area;</li> <li>- Because all BM residents should know these facts and what to do when it happens again;</li> <li>- Honestly, it should be required viewing for everyone who lives in the Mountains!</li> <li>- Good for our scattered family to see what Mountains fires are actually like;</li> <li>- Essential for people who live in the Mountains;</li> </ul> <p>+ WIDER RELEVANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's a valuable film, relevant to everyone in Australia;</li> </ul>
<b>FIRE STORIES-LIVING WITH RISK IS A GOOD TEACHING TOOL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A powerful film showing the role of community, the need to be prepared, the ferocity of fire and the resilience of people;</li> <li>- Well made, important wake-up call;</li> <li>- It is hard to explain the risk without sounding alarmist. Let people see for themselves;</li> <li>- To learn from it and see how catastrophic it was on the day and to hear first line stories;</li> <li>- It presents the reality of fire threat and what you can do about it;</li> <li>- The idea of that others can be informed by the film;</li> <li>- Essential viewing for all Australians - whether they think they live in a bush fire risk area - or not;</li> <li>- It reflects the emotions and community working together in a crisis;</li> <li>- It is a worthy tool in one's preparedness for emergency eventualities;</li> <li>- it's impact and relevance;</li> <li>- Real stories;</li> </ul>
<b>TO RAISE AWARENESS LEVEL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The unexpected conditions and frailty of human life;</li> <li>- Others who were around Winmalee at the time would be interested in to footage and people in it. Also making sure those here now see just what a fire is like;</li> <li>- Bushfire season;</li> <li>- To alert people to how quickly a situation can develop;</li> <li>- The fact that we are all "living with risk" in the Blue Mountains area;</li> <li>- The unexpected conditions and frailty of human life;</li> <li>- The content of the film and the community spirit;</li> </ul>



**PREPARATION**

- We decided our house isn't quite as safe as it could be;
- It's a good resource to promote preventative activity - eg have a evacuation plan & back pack handy to go.

**GENERAL ENGAGEMENT**

- I know some that lives in Buena Vista Road;
- Quality of the production, good footage from the time;
- Having conversations about personalising bushfire risk, awareness of local stories;
- It is deep and personal to my life in the Blue Mountains as I have always lived here and always on the interface of the bushland that I deeply love.



TABLE A2-(v): Why did you rate the usefulness of the film in helping you and/or others to better understand living with the risk of bushfire

Average ranking 5

<b>FIRE STORIES-LIVING WITH RISK IS A GOOD TEACHING TOOL</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nothing compares to visuals. And real stories;</li> <li>- Seems about right;</li> <li>- It's shows real life stories plus examines what can be done to mitigate risk;</li> <li>- the film presents the reality of fire behaviour and how people live through its impacts;</li> <li>- It is a great way of educating others - words don't do justice;</li> <li>- Gives you the perception of the people living the disaster;</li> <li>- Seeing the speed at which the event escalated;</li> <li>- It is honest, practical and an insight into what it is like to live through a bushfire;</li> <li>- It covered all aspects from the fire starting to the recovery and rebuilding;</li> <li>- Combination of fire, post-fire people who shared their stories;</li> <li>- The information contained;</li> <li>- it's very human;</li> <li>- It brings home the reality of a bushfire, and the randomness of its effects;</li> <li>- Well made, logical, personalized;</li> <li>- Not only did the film provide insight into the aspect of immediate threat, but similarly the aftermath and long-term issues such as rebuilding and being underinsured;</li> </ul>
<b>RAISE AWARENESS LEVEL / PREPARATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was eye opening;</li> <li>- I realize now how volatile the bushfires are and we need to prepare for the season;</li> <li>- The I formation in the film made me realize we need to do more to prepare;</li> <li>- Makes it both urgent and important to understand the risks of living with fire;</li> <li>- Really interesting - I had no idea what it would be like;</li> <li>- The highlighted many of the issues surrounding bushfires e.g lack of water pressure, safety of pets, FiresNearMe app;</li> <li>- Better preparedness of what could be;</li> <li>- We were lucky in the 2013 fires, no lives lost. The next fire might be just as bad or even worse and people need to know what to do and what happens after fires;</li> <li>- Gave realistic insight and stressed importance of planning for different scenarios;</li> <li>- Just the little things can make your home as fire safe. We now have a plan;</li> <li>- Very relatable and gave some insights into what to consider, in terms of risk;</li> <li>- To educate people on the swiftness of fires and how easily you can get caught without preparation;</li> </ul>





- Shows just what fire is like and what we need to be prepared for (help in decisions to stay or go);
- We all need to realise that bushfires are "on our doorstep" in the Blue Mountains and seeing how others coped in a fire situation brought home the need to be prepared and have a plan;
- Better to be pre-warned than caught out in an emergency;
- I live within the fire zone;
- It makes you think about your own home and how prepared it is;
- It concentrates on the principle issues that can occur and the need to prepare for emergency eventualities.

**SHORTCOMING**

- Some of the film was not useful;
- I felt like I understood how people felt however the prep and planning and technical details were not as clear from the film;
- While the impacts were well demonstrated, there wasn't a lot of specific fire history info.