

The bushfires in NSW and Queensland are simply examples of policy failure, not portends of the future 9 / 9 / 2019

We at Red Eagle teach individuals and communities to self-protect against the running flame and prepare them to defend against multiple leap frog spotting and mass ember attack. We are therefore dismayed with the rubbish the fire agency leaders are proclaiming about these bushfires in NSW and Queensland. It should be questioned by the media rather than printing verbatim quotes. Fires in September are not that unusual. Our aim is zero house loss in severe bushfire attack. Our concern is that their bushfire policy does not prevent house loss. They still respond to bushfire outbreaks, rather than prepare the communities for defence. They have not planned properly to protect houses, and they with their multimillion budgets have again been caught napping. People are losing their houses because fire agencies favour evacuation over education in self-defence.

Business as usual for the Insurers. ABC on line: The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has declared the bushfires a catastrophe and will give priority to claims from affected policy holders. “The ICA head of risk and operations Karl Sullivan said ... it was too early to assess what the number of claims lodged might be. That's quite typical with an event like this where there's been a lot of evacuations and people have been following the advice of emergency services to remove themselves from harm's way”.

Why this scaremongering without advice or hope of mitigation?

The Courier: Acting Fire Commissioner Mike Wassing “We’ve never seen fire danger indices, fire danger ratings, at this time of the year as we’re seeing now,” he said. “Never seen this before in recorded history. Fire weather has never been as severe this early in spring”.

Just a minute (1) On Friday 6th, the 3pm weather at Canungra was 32 deg, 19% humidity and average 15 kph winds from NE and at Toowoomba was 28 deg, 7% humidity and average 41 kph winds from WNW.

“So this is an omen if you will, a warning of the fire season that we’re likely to see ahead in the south eastern parts of the state.”

Just a minute (2) He is a Jeremiah - - we will all be “rooned”. One mass of dry windy air does not justify a prediction of worse to come.

The Courier quotes these figures:

“Twenty-one properties, including 15 homes and the historic Binna Burra Lodge, have been lost since Thursday. That compares with 40 properties lost across the entire state to bushfires in the past 130 years.”

If the historic figures are accurate, this is evidence their suppression-dominated policies are failing to prevent house loss. Let’s hope they will re-examine and refine their policies to return to their remarkably low average rate, rather than blame climate change or Mother Nature. Fire behaviour has not changed since Mother Nature wrote the laws of physics and thermodynamics.

But then this meaningless comment:

“Acting Fire Commissioner Mike Wassing assured Queenslanders that emergency services were “absolutely ready” for the season ahead.”

Wrong. They are not ready to prevent house loss in severe weather. Fire agencies refuse to acknowledge that their suppression policies are helpless against a running fire above windy FDI 30, like these fires. The troops are not to blame. They will contain the fires when the winds moderate, but the fire agencies have no answers while fires are running with the wind as uncontrolled infernos, which is when the damage is caused.

[This comment is a carbon copy of the vacuous words of Victoria's Premier Brumby. He told Victorians on Black Saturday eve that the fire agencies were the "best ever prepared" to deal with the Black Saturday forecast. Next day 173 deaths and 2000 houses lost within a few hours. The fire agencies and the people witnessed the effect of failing to protect communities against the running flame and failing to prepare communities to defend against leap frog spotting and mass ember attack. Undeterred, he blamed Mother Nature, and he repeated this same media spin phrase six weeks later, ahead of another severe weather forecast.]

Yesterday's Guardian – "Eighteen homes have been lost in Queensland with four residences and a shooting range destroyed in NSW"

ABC On line NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said ... "Never before have we recorded extreme fire danger conditions this early in the month of September," he said.

"Normally, you would expect those sorts of conditions as you come closer into the summer months."

Just a minute (1) – On Friday 6th, the 3pm weather at Armadale was 25 deg, 9% humidity and average 46 kph winds from NW. It is the same dry windy airmass as Queensland got, but is not extreme FDI.

"It is a sobering reminder of what is ahead, with the outlook indicating the next three or four months is dominated by above-average temperatures, below average rainfall and unfortunately there is no meaningful signal anywhere for drought-breaking, relieving rain."

Just a minute (2) The weather bureau is adventurous with one-week forecasts. A 3–4 month outlook is in the realm of 50/50 guesswork. You cannot use it to plan from. We always plan for the worst case. However, his forlorn hope for rain is a concern. A well-prepared property or town will survive a bushfire attack during the longest dry spell. Does he not realise the dampening effect of a heavy rain on bushfire fuel flammability is only a few days? Strategies based on rapid response and then hope like this are why we worry about people's houses within his jurisdiction. They should implement strategies like ours that are based on removing bushfire fuel and preparing residents BEFORE the bushfire attack.

In conclusion

We note the media report house loss numbers as a measure of fire severity. We suspect that local people in these areas want house loss to be zero. We note that fire agencies report house loss like a cricket score, but they have no policies to deliver zero house loss. They spend more and more multi millions on rapid response for rapid fire suppression, which has a very limited capability in severe weather. They dismiss house loss as collateral damage, yet people's lives are shattered and they do not want that outcome. For example, during Victoria's first 150 years or so, before the fire agencies had media domination, people fiercely self-defended their homes. People deserve better outcomes for their taxes than evacuation and consequent house loss. Make fire agencies aim for zero house loss and we will start to eradicate the bushfire menace from our midst. Ask your MP - why do they tolerate this annual distress?