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NEWS

Thousands of homes at bushfire risk

BY REX MARTINICH

MORE than 4600 Riverina homes have been identified as "at risk" from bushfire this summer due to their close proximity to dense vegetation, according to an environmental risk report.

Consultancy firm Risk Frontiers found that 74 per cent of homes lost in previous bushfires were located within 100 metres of dense vegetation.

In data provided to *The DA*, the firm identified "at risk" properties across the Riverina, including nearly 300 homes across Wagga's suburbs. Some of the areas most at risk include Tumut, with 242 homes near bushland, Tolland with 108 homes and Mount Austin and Ganmain with more than 90 homes each.

Ganmain and Currawarna had some of the region's highest percentages of homes in the risk zone at more than 30 per cent.

Risk Frontiers resilience general manager Andrew Gissing said people living close to the bush needed to be aware of the risks.

"If bushfires similar to those happening on the coast were to happen in the Riverina, which they have in the past like the Junee bushfires ten years ago, (residents) need to consider what their bushfire plan is."

Riverina Highlands Rural Fire Service district manager Jon Gregory said the distance to bushland was one risk factor.

"It's how well the property is prepared, what it is constructed of, whether the nearby vegetation is wet or

dry, all those things," he said.

Mr Gregory said spot fire and ember attacks could also threaten homes up to 15 kilometres away from bushland.

"It's a bit like uncharted waters in seeing fire behaviour and fire behavior we have never seen previously, and the landscape is very dry due to the drought," he said.

"If you are situated amongst a native forest, you are definitely going to be at a higher risk."

University of Sydney environmental engineering senior lecturer Dr Petr Matous said residential planning would have to adapt to bushfire risks as it had for flood risk. "With climate change, we are potentially moving to completely new levels of fire hazards and the traditional hazard reduction methods will not be enough," he said.



FIRE DANGER: The number of homes in Riverina suburbs, towns and localities at greater bushfire risk. Data source: RISK FRONTIERS

