

Submission Number: NND.001.00114

Submission Of: Janet Reynolds

Your Details

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Preferred means of contact: Email
What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my personal situation
What was your personal situation in relation to the 2019-20 Bushfires? I lost everything in the Yankees Gap bushfire in August 2018.
Where do you live? Bega Valley (A)

Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?
There was nothing that worked well in my case in 2018. Zero interest from council and they couldn't give me any help apart from offering counseling which I did not want.
They couldn't access any funds from the Tathra fires and to this day I haven't received any financial help. I am still cleaning my block. At 74 years of age the chances of me having a home again are very small.

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?
As stated above. I found out that a neighbor of the man who started the fire by burning off reported seeing smoke to the bushfire captain [REDACTED] on the Saturday before the Wednesday when the fire raged through my property. The response from [REDACTED] was I can't do anything now I'm taking my daughter shopping.
There were eight fire engines there the next day but it was too little too late. We weren't informed at any time until 15 minutes before the fire came through. I drove out through the fire.

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?
The first action has to be a strong response to mitigating climate change. We as a country have to take immediate action to phase out fossil fuels and invest heavily in renewable energy research and development. The more quickly we can reduce emissions the more effect we can have in reducing global warming.
The fire response services need realistic funding and training.
Firefighting aircraft need to be available 24/7.
Ships aircraft carriers could be deployed off shore to provide safe landing for firefighting helicopters and respite areas for firefighters and residents affected and isolated to coastal situations.
All affected individuals should be treated equally and helped with clean up and recovery.
Early warning systems for all natural disasters.
Evacuation centres to be adequately resourced with efficient systems in place that don't create further stress for affected individuals. Having attended Red Cross workshops with the Tathra fire affected I could see that individuals were continuing to hold stress because of their evacuation experience. We want quick recovery to get people back to normal life. Whatever the disaster we need to have procedures in place to keep people healthy and calm.
Communities need to be able to access safe and suitable buildings with access to generators and clean water.
People in charge in evacuation centres need to be familiar with the local situation not outsiders.
For example in Bega the Showgrounds are not really suitable being inadequate for really large groups of people and opposite the major gas storage centre. The original old Bega hospital is in a safer position and could be adapted with not too much expense.

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?
The science is clear in relating the frequency of natural disasters to the rapidly changing climate. We need to take this very seriously and work towards reducing emissions as quickly as possible. Unfortunately the ill informed and ignorant are holding us back from taking the steps that need to be put in place to try and combat the factors that are exacerbating the conditions that are a threat to our society and our country.

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