

**Submission Number: NND.001.00519**

**Submission Of: Brian Barwick**

**Your Details**

Email address:

Phone:

Preferred means of contact: Email

What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise?

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation?

**Your Submission**

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?

Below is a letter I wrote late February 2020 hopefully to be viewed by the Prime Minister. (Originals attached).

G'Day Scott,

I'm a 40 year CFA veteran and I feel compelled to write to you about the growing potential for an ongoing national disaster across Australia's eastern states. (Annual Major Bushfires)

I've been involved in many major fires and have seen and felt first-hand the devastation that fires can bring, loss of life, property and the future for some is both very real and raw.

My main concern is the lack of focus or intent on the major reason why the fires have and will continue to course the devastation they do, (FUEL LOADS). The fire triangle which is what all firefighters understand is simply [OXYGEN - HEAT - FUEL] (see below) take one of these elements away and we have no fire.

We can't do anything about Oxygen as of course we all need it, we can only do limited work around the heat element because the weather has been around for millions of years and I don't really see that we can do a lot in that space, but Fuel we can!

There are only three ways to reduce the fuel in our bush, log it, eat it or burn it.

I'm not a logging industry advocate but there is a very real need for this industry to continue maybe in a more overall sustainable way. This industry brings everything to the table when we talk fuel reduction, fire prevention and fire suppression if we could use the logging industry to strategically log in better designated areas with the main focus being fire prevention it would have huge benefits both to the doomed industry and to fire behavior, also the use of the logging industries equipment in fire suppression is by far the biggest underestimated area of fire attack, we have seen all the news telecasts where we have the firefighters, air attack bombers and everything else front and center but we rarely see the yellow machines doing their very important work within the bush, most if not all of these machines are from the timber industry they are bush fire hardened and their operators live and work in the bush mostly all their lives so they know their patch. A largely reduced logging industry means a reduced capacity for this very much needed and experienced resource to be called on for fire suppression activities which will in turn aid in the fire spread and devastation.

By eating it I mean the removal of cattle in the high country, this has greatly increased the fine fuels (which gives fire its intensity). Now I'm not a cattle industry advocate either but blind Freddy can see that the removal of this industry has not only allowed these fine fuels (weeds) and also vermin to spread these weeds (brumbies and Samba Deer) to flourish but it also removes the ability to have a second opinion on the health of our high country (Cattlemen) to monitor and nurture these areas.

Controlled burning has been a very important part of fuel reduction and regeneration for centuries, but we have definitely dropped the ball in this area in the last ten years. I have close friends that are employed by DEWLP and on many occasions we have had discussions over a beer around the ability to complete strategic burning in the Gippsland area and the plain ridiculous reasons why the burns that they regularly have applied for are knocked back by the bureaucratic reasoning of senior people in their organisation. I know of one burn that they tried to cancel but the forester was adamant for it to go ahead and he was personally ridiculed to no end by the green movement both within DEWLP and the general public some locals included, he now should be hailed a hero because that burn undoubtedly saved the township of Nowa Nowa this summer. Another instance is when a DEWLP employee explained to me during our shift at Swifts Creek IMT how a number of burns were knocked back last season with ridiculous unfounded reasons around Mallacoota they certainly would have reduced the damage and anxiety that the locals there suffered. You won't hear from these people as they like you and I want to keep their jobs!

What has made me angry and deeply concerned and has prompted me to express my opinion in this way is the Victorian State Government has convened an inquiry led by Inspector-General for Emergency Management Tony Pearce to consider preparedness and response to the 2019/20 Victorian fire season this would have been a very welcome initiative but for the terms of reference. They are, Effectiveness of command and control - "Witch Hunt", The declaration of a state of disaster - "After the event", Timeliness and effectiveness of Commonwealth assistance and resources - "After the event", Evacuation planning and practices - "After the event", Relief and recovery work - "After the event" Creation of the State's bushfire recovery agency - "After the event". When I say after the event I mean after main fire runs have occurred. These Terms of reference are in mostly the post fire front activity which gives us no real power to address the root cause Fuel load.

These fires will be more frequent and very much more volatile going forward (the doomsday global warming experts tell us that) but we don't have to make it ten times worse by not acting on something that we can take some control and is very cost effective, reducing Fuel Load!

I've attached a dot point summary of some of my firefighting experiences only to help validate some of my reasoning, you will see that I have

fought fires in most states of our beautiful country, I have been a Strike team Leader and Captain for many years and on numerous occasions I have had to make heartbreaking decisions on which houses we can protect with some safety and which ones we can't which is fine unless the occupants will not leave which gives me no choice but to have firefighters assist which puts them in grave danger I keep telling myself never again but sadly we still do it regularly simply because of the ferocity and speed of these fires.

(Put yourself in the front seat of the truck below D9 Strike team Bunyip Ridge Fire "Black Saturday").

Most if not all of the fires this season up the east coast have either started in National Parks or got their momentum up in our national parks either way we need to have an national inquiry regarding this fire season with the main term of reference "How do we strategically manage our national parks with the Number ONE objective of reducing fuel loads per hectare within these parks" the rest is just window dressing. We urgently need real change in the way we manage all our national parks or the 19/20 fire season will be a regular occurrence (or worse) not because of global warming or some other flimsy unquantifiable reason but directly due to fuel loads. (keep the radical Greens under control) so that the real Greens (Loggers, Cattlemen & Locals) can manage the bush for everyone!

If you would like to understand further where I'm coming from give me a ring or better still come to this lovely West Gippsland country town of mine Neerim South and I will show you around have a coffee or shout you a beer, your call!

Fire Triangle.

Labertouche "Bunyip Ridge" Fire.

Regards

Brian Barwick

Captain

Neerim South Fire Brigade



[Do you agree to your submission being published?](#) Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name

[Supporting material provided:](#)

Scott Morrison.docx

Brian Barwick fire fighting history.docx

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My main concern is the lack of focus or intent on the major reason why the fires have and will continue to course the devastation they do, (FUEL LOADS). The fire triangle which is what all firefighters understand is simply [OXYGEN - HEAT - FUEL] (*see below*) take one of these elements away and we have no fire.

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I'm not a logging industry advocate but there is a very real need for this industry to continue maybe in a more overall sustainable way. This industry brings everything to the table when we talk fuel reduction, fire prevention and fire suppression if we could use the logging industry to strategically log in better designated areas with the main focus being fire prevention it would have huge benefits both to the doomed industry and to fire behaviour, also the use of the logging industries equipment in fire suppression is by far the biggest underestimated area of fire attack, we have seen all the news telecasts where we have the firefighters, air attack bombers and everything else front and centre but we rarely see the yellow machines doing their very important work within the bush, most if not all of these machines are from the timber industry they are bushfire hardened and their operators live and work in the bush mostly all their lives so they know their patch. A largely reduced logging industry means a reduced capacity for this very much needed and experienced resource to be called on for fire suppression activities which will in turn aid in the fire spread and devastation.

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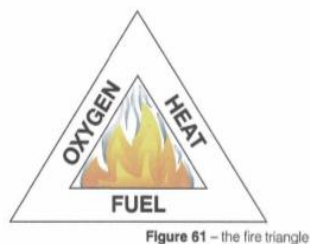
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Fire Triangle.



Labertouche "Bunyip Ridge" Fire.



Regards

**Brian Barwick**

Captain

Neerim South Fire Brigade





## **Country Fire Authority History - Brian Barwick - [REDACTED]**

- 40 years volunteer with Country Fire Authority Victoria.  
Captain Neerim South Fire Brigade since 2002.
  
- Involved in numerous fires in the 80's & 90's including Ash Wednesday.
- Crew Leader Ferny Creek Fire 1997.
- Strike Team Leader & Sector Commander at Numerous Fires in Gippsland since 2000.
- Crew Leader Eyre Peninsula South Australia 2001
- Crew Leader with Task Force Hilltop Fire Sydney NSW 2002.
- Strike Team Leader Gelantipy fire East Gippsland 2003.
- Strike Team Leader Balmoral Fire Grampians Western Victoria 2005
- Sector Commander Moondarra Fire Erica 2006
- Deputy Operations Officer Gippsland Floods Bairnsdale IMT 2007.
- Strike Team Leader Bunyip Ridge Fire Black Saturday 2009.
- Ground Observer Charlton Floods Western Victoria 2011
- Crew Leader with Task Force at Dunalley Fire Tasmania 2013.
- Strike Team Leader Licola Fire 2014.
- Sector Commander Task Force at Northcliffe Fire Western Australia 2015
- Ground Observer Swifts Creek 2017.
- Sector Commander Bunyip State Park Fire 2018.
- Sector Commander Thomson Dam/Walhalla Fire 2018.
- Strike Team Leader Gaspers Mountain Fire NSW November 2019.
- Deputy Operations Officer Bairnsdale IMT December 2019
- Deputy Operations Officer Swifts Creek IMT January 2020.
  
- Awarded National Emergency Medal 2013
- Awarded National Medal 2<sup>nd</sup> Clasp 2015
- Awarded CFA Life Member 2015