

**Submission Number: NND.001.00712**

**Submission Of: Hannah Steel**

### Your Details

Email address:

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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?

Where do you live? Wollondilly (A)

### Your Submission

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

The grants and loans programs offering financial support for small businesses was a truly excellent response.

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

- The government's continual denial of the impact and significance of climate change on the bushfires was a disastrous response. In the short-term, it was insensitive, seeming like the government did not want to acknowledge the seriousness of this disaster. In the long-term, it has the potential to be catastrophic. Ministers denying climate change on national (and international) media platforms spreads dangerous misinformation to a public who look to their leaders for reliable advice.

Our own national authorities – including the Bureau of Meteorology and the RFS – have acknowledged that the extraordinary severity of the past season's fires was exacerbated by global warming. Why did the government contradict government-funded scientific bodies?

This was the overwhelming failure of the government's response to the bushfires.

- Further failures that were exposed were our country's great insufficiency for combatting fires. If we tackle the problem of global warming, we can avoid disasters like last season from becoming a regular occurrence. Bushfires, however, have always been a part of our nation's natural cycle, and we need to be better prepared for them. Our firefighting force of wonderful volunteers was not sufficient. The team of firefighters in one of the worst fire-afflicted countries in the world, should not have to depend on donations and volunteers to survive. There was an extraordinary lack of planning, including government cuts of 30-40% in fire budgets this year alone. This cannot be allowed to continue.

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

In the short-term, we need to address planning failures. We need a professional, national firefighting team, in addition to our heroic volunteers. Our firefighters deserve financial support. This needs to be a government-funded body. Furthermore, money needs to be invested in our natural defence: in containment lines, fire-resistant planted landscapes with 'fireproof walls' suited to each ecosystem.

- More importantly, we need prevention, not just mitigation. Damage control is not enough. The government has so far done an admirable job in preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. They did this by listening to the advice of scientists, and acting swiftly upon this advice. The same needs to be done for climate change. Stop contradicting what government-funded scientific bodies are urging us to do. Start taking their advice.

- Why does the government continue to subsidise and support the fossil fuels industry? It is economically and environmentally not viable. We, as a country, simply cannot afford the billions of dollars of damage that disastrous fire seasons give us. Economist Ross Garnaud warned us of this many years ago. Our disastrous bushfire season has, unfortunately, proved him right. Let us use the opportunity of the COVID-19 lockdown to 'restart green', as many European countries are suggesting. Let us create new jobs in the renewables industry – jobs that will be safe for ten, twenty years – unlike the dying coal industry, which is rapidly losing support from lenders and insurance companies. Fossil fuels are only an immediate-term economic gain. They will cost us far greater in the future.

- The government needs to acknowledge the seriousness of climate change. This begins with awareness and education. Climate change and global warming needs to be a part of schools' curricula. We require of our students that they achieve a certain mark in English, that they receive certain marks in their other subjects, that they partake in a certain number of hours of community service. Learning about their future is just as important.

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

Do you agree to your submission being published? Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name