

Submission Number: NND.001.00733

Submission Of: John H Learmonth

Your Details

<p>Email address:</p> <p>Phone:</p> <p>Preferred means of contact: Email</p> <p>What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my personal situation</p> <p>What was your personal situation in relation to the 2019-20 Bushfires?</p> <p>Where do you live? Musk</p>

Your Submission

<p>In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?</p> <p>In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?</p> <p>In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?</p> <p>I have a science background and a long experience in agriculture. Every year we dread the fire season, like most others in our position. We learn to live with the risks. However climate change is making this more and more difficult. Fire seasons are starting earlier, finishing later and we are seeing the frequency of much more extreme dangerous conditions occurring. Climate change in its current level is here to stay in our lives, our children's lives and their children's lives. It will get worse if the world cannot eliminate its carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels.</p> <p>I will try to be brief and to the point.</p> <p>To deal with the bushfire problem we need to consult the science, not the politics. More burning of forests is very unlikely to have changed what was experienced this year. Peoples views coming from local areas where property has been lost are not always well informed. The amount of fuel for fires is a direct relationship with the amount of rain , sunlight and soil type. There is not a lot that can be done do to change this.</p> <p>The debris produced from falling leaves, limbs and trees exists in equilibrium with the soil microbes and microflora. If it did not then the debris would quickly become metres and metres deep. Burning of forests in the way westerners do it kills the soil microbes and it takes years for them to recover. Burning dries out the forest floor, promotes under story growth of often of very flammable weed species that burn fiercely. In short burning makes our forests more fire prone. To burn forests from Maryborough Qld to Cape Lewin in WA on a frequent basis is an absurdity. It can not be done. So please do not tell us that we need to do more burning. Strategic burning and maintenance around assets yes but not the whole forest, it is not possible and it does not work but it needs to be confined to this purpose.</p> <p>Fires need to be put out much quicker. They often start in very inaccessible areas. Extinguishing the fire is difficult but we need to be able to put them out soon after they start. We need to find new ways to put fires out far more quickly than we do - perhaps the use of drones or swat teams to drop into the areas where the fire starts. Once a fire is let burn, get large and hot and in a year like the one we just experienced, it is impossible to extinguish. Certainly the government is going to have to spend a lot more money on research, and resources because the fires are going to get worse.</p> <p>Our attitude to risk has to change. Fire fighting has always been dangerous. No one wants lives lost. However lines of demarcation between different authorities, unions, states etc do not help. Cooperation, all on the same radio frequency etc will help a lot.</p> <p>The causes of fires has to be looked at also. The potential for fires to start must be reduced. We cannot do anything about lightening strikes but we can do something about the following items.</p> <p>Camp fires are an absurdity in our bushfire seasons. People are not always careful and thoughtful. A spark on the wrong day will start an uncontrollable bushfire. Also fires often burn for weeks and months after they have apparently been extinguished.</p> <p>Electricity lines and another cause of bad fires. Electricity lines must be put underground in the forest areas, it costs money but bushfires cost much more.</p> <p>Trail bikes through forest tracks are capable of starting fires in forests. The use of trail bikes through forested areas in our bushfire seasons must be prohibited.</p> <p>Arsonists are always a threat. We need to do more work in addressing the psychology and sociology of people in these groups.</p> <p>Climate change is here and not going away. It can and will get worse if the world cannot rein in its CO2 emissions. Forests will shrink and the process of shrinkage will inevitably be effected through reduced rainfall and increased fire. Planning schemes must prevent building development in bushfire prone forest areas. It is absurd to build in a bush setting with forest for 360 degrees and expect to have insurance, to have the area made safe, and the buildings rescued in the event of a fire.</p> <p>I hope my comments may be useful in the evaluation of the steps to take and those not to take in reducing the huge damage caused to our</p>

country by bush fires.

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