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Submission Number: NND.001.00745

Submission Of: Ian Heriot

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? Bendigo

Your Submission

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

Please refer to my supporting material

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

Please refer to my supporting material

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

Please refer to my supporting material

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

Please refer to my supporting material

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

Supporting material provided:

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.pdf

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

I thank the Royal Commission for this opportunity to lodge my submission.

I wish to address the following Terms of Reference:

- a. the responsibilities of, and coordination between, the Commonwealth and State, Territory and local Governments relating to preparedness for, response to, resilience to, and recovery from, natural disasters, and what should be done to improve these arrangements, including with respect to resource sharing;
- b. Australia's arrangements for improving resilience and adapting to changing climatic conditions, what actions should be taken to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters, and whether accountability for natural disaster risk management, preparedness, resilience and recovery should be enhanced, including through a nationally consistent accountability and reporting framework and national standards;
- h. the need to establish mechanisms to facilitate the timely communication of information, etc...

Natural disasters information updates and reports

For all residents to have practical knowledge of an emergency, the information network must:

- be accessible by all citizens, free of charge;
- provide up-to-the-minute reports;
- have detailed and accurate information;
- deliver reports with intimate local knowledge;
- transmit information in the absence of mobile phone networks, electricity supplies and road access.

There is extensive evidence that the ABC fully meets all of the requirements for an emergency information and communication network.

ABC contribution during recent fires

Victoria's mobile app 'VicEmergency' is well designed and supplies timely warnings, but it relies on mobile network coverage; often the first casualty in natural disasters.

Commercial TV and radio news services provide reports of natural disasters, but they lack up-to-the-minute local detail. They do not have access to the large team of local reporters, in regional areas, seen on the ABC.

In recent bushfires, the ABC was recognised as the default source of reporting with detailed location and spread of the fires, road closures, warnings and evacuation orders. This information was freely available to all, via AM and FM radio throughout the fires.

ABC South East NSW team on covering bushfires as family, friends and community were threatened

"I don't think I did anything life-saving but information can save lives. A lot of people told us that the only information they had was through ABC South East NSW and I feel strongly the ABC has to maintain that depth within the regions to keep doing emergency broadcasting. Living in this region makes you care a lot more than someone who doesn't — you face the people who listen to you every day, there's a lot at stake and you are really invested in the region."

Simon Lauder - Breakfast Program.

"When national media leave, we're still here"

"I am proud to work at the ABC and that what I do matters. I think sometimes in the daily grind of news coverage we forget how important we are to people who are listening,"

[Chief of Staff, Lisa] Markham said.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QAGCyTi6HRoD7DmMIpel62N52swuJvkhdxsN7Is4I/edit#>

ABC - a valuable resource to be preserved and supported

The nation is extremely fortunate to have the ABC in place to provide this emergency reporting service.

All states and territories benefit from this national network.

They do not have to provide or duplicate this service.

Successive Federal governments have significantly cut ABC budgets, while demanding no reduction in services.

If this valuable resource is to be preserved and supported, I urge the Royal Commission to recognize the ABC's unique contribution, by actively calling for Federal budget restitution for the ABC, to support detailed reporting in all emergency situations.

Ian Heriot