

Submission Number: NND.001.00760

Submission Of: Robert E. Jackson

Your Details

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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? West Gippsland

Your Submission

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

Our situation is that we own a holiday house at Gipsy Point in East Gippsland, but were unable to join the bush fire response due to the closing of the Princess Highway. So I cannot comment on what worked well.

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

In the Question & Answer section appearing in the Week End Australian magazine of April 4-5 '20, I became aware of the importance of garden design & maintenance in property protection in bush fire zones. In particular to the reference "Landscaping for Bushfire" published by the CFA (following a recommendation of the 2009 Royal Commission), & the Australian Plant Society's list of "Fire resistant & retardant plants". As farmers from West Gippsland & holiday house owners at Gipsy Point in far East Gippsland, we are acutely aware of fire risk.

In the case of Gipsy Point lessons can be learnt from the recent '19-'20 summer fire. That is well preparedness, & appropriate garden design & plant selection in accordance with the above references can be effective even in the face of an intense bushfire raging as a result of no fuel reduction over the last 40 years. Our house & property, which we were remiss in not preparing, along with other properties in the village survived. This was at least in part due to a 6Ha European & selected Australian native garden between us & the main fire front. Fuel reduction in other private properties & in an adjacent power line easement also assisted in deflecting the fire to the south. Heroic behavior by residents that stayed also contributed to the saving of most village properties.

NOTE that public authorities made no attempt to reduce fuel loadings on land they were meant to be managing adjacent to the village.

As someone who I thought was reasonably well informed, I am amazed that I haven't heard of these references before. They should be heavily promoted throughout SE Australia & beyond because they seem to work very well. In this regard where have been the State Governments, Authorities such as DELP, the CFA, Councils, Landcare, etc, in promoting these documents?

The alarming thing is that one arm of government is not following the policies of another, eg following CFA guidelines. For example Gipsy residents have been forced by the East Gippsland Council, under pressure from the EPA, to desist from burning, at an appropriate time of year, green waste eg branches, tree loppings, etc, from local properties. This had been the practice for decades & had occurred without incident. Instead green waste is to be trucked to Mallacoota & mulched for use in local residents gardens. This is in direct contravention of the CFA guidelines for mulching in bush fire zones. I wonder how many homes were lost at Mallacoota through this well meaning but misguided approach?

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

See above

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

In terms of fuel reduction, why can't the Victorian Government just follow the recommendations of the 2009 Royal Commission?

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

NND.001.00760 – Addendum

Add to question 9 – Photos can be supplied if you would like them.