

Submission Number: NND.001.00804

Submission Of: Helen L S Taylor

Your Details

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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? Bega Valley (A)

Your Submission

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

Notification of the need to evacuate came in a timely manner. We evacuated safely.

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

Response to the initial fire was far too slow. The fire was ignited by a lightning strike in a National Park (inaccessible by fire trucks) and was not attended to quickly enough.

If the fire was bombed by water/fire retardant/fire fighting planes when it first started then it would not have taken off like it did.

Past experience by locals who understood what could occur was not listened to. A devastating fire had begun in the same area in 1952 and the locals experienced a similar outcome with loss of life, livestock and buildings/homes.

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

Prepare

Hazard reduction burning, in National Parks, in townships, along roadsides and private property.

Inspection of areas to insure hazard reduction.

Mitigate

Initial response should be 'go early, and go hard'. Put the fire out as soon as possible. (The fire in our area that burnt 14 houses in our township of Quaama was deemed inaccessible and not acted upon immediately by planes as it should have been.)

Response

Equip all Volunteer Fire Brigades with fully functioning and fully equipped vehicles and fire fighting equipment.

Recovery

Removal of asbestos affected materials has been far too slow. People are ready to rebuild but cannot because the asbestos has yet to be removed. People are now facing a winter in tents and caravans because they cannot employ their own asbestos removal contractor.

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

Please note that our township of Quaama was not on the list under - Bega Valley.

I had to note that I come from Cobargo, which is not the case.

Quaama was badly affected. We had to evacuate as the fire front engulfed the town. Quaama has some 200 residents.

14 houses were lost. Thankfully we had no loss of life.

We could not return to our homes for at least a week due to electricity and trees down over roads. Thankfully our house was safe, but we continue to be effected emotionally, and financially, by the event even though our home still stands.

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