

Submission Number: NND.001.00878

Submission Of: Joan Payne AM

Your Details

Email address:

Phone:

Preferred means of contact: Email

What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise? My knowledge, involvement and long term commitment to the natural environment

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation?

Your Submission

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

My comments are personal. I have been involved in nature conservation and environmental protection since 1977. My involvement has been with large State organized conservation groups, smaller conservation and land management groups and as a Board Member for over 8 years on the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority.

During the 1990's the Western Australian fire service (FESA) reached out to conservation groups to address the issue of forest and bushland fires. This communication was appreciated by all and excellent communication led to improvements and advances which were of benefit to both parties. I don't know to what extent, if any, these advances are still in force. One important initiative was the agreement that Fast Response was a key issue when dealing with fires. Seminars and conferences on fire management were convened where fire service managers, conservation and land management volunteers and government workers attended. I would like to see this approach re-activated. One long standing issue of concern is fire reduction burns. There have been serious damage to nature conservation values when broad scale fuel reduction burns get out of control. There needs to be more reflection on how to deal with fires in both forests and bushland areas so that both the protection of the natural environment and public safety are met. Communication is important.

Management of conservation areas is important. Weed reduction (which often fuel fires through careless behaviour) should be a key issue in prevention.

My views are that the following should be addressed -

Good communication between the fire emergency service, local communities living near forests, and conservationists

A policy of 'Fast Response' to putting out fires be adopted

Fire service to be present post fire so that no ignitions occur

Fire service should be adequately funded (including volunteer fire fighters)

Grassy weed reduction near bushland to be carried out by land manager/s

Knowledge and understanding of fire impacts on fauna, and flora

This knowledge and understanding of the fauna and flora be part of the training of fire managers

In Western Australia there is disagreement as to the effectiveness and acceptability of fire reduction burns which have in the past called significant environmental damage when they get out of control, in National Parks and Nature Reserves. No acceptable response to this practice has been given the attention it deserves

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

See comments above

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

Many housing developments are sited adjacent to forests and bushland. This puts the residents and their properties at risk. It also puts the nature conservation values at risk. There needs to be serious consideration as to the acceptability of allowing housing in proximity to nature conservation areas such as National Parks and Nature Conservation Reserves.

With a drying climate and the likelihood of dangerous, unpredictable weather conditions (Climate Change) living in proximity to nature conservation and bushland areas cannot be ignored.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the Royal Commission.

Australia has some of the most remarkable landscapes, flora and fauna communities on the planet. We as Australians have a responsibility to respect, protect and nurture this amazing biodiversity. This may require a re-think as to how and where we choose to live.

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