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**Submission Of: Sue Tasman**

### 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? Nambucca (A) - Hyland Park (L)

### Your Submission

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

1. The response from the RFS, SES, Parks and Wildlife Officers and other first responders, saving lives and saving homes. There is nothing to compare with their commitment and their courage, and their sacrifice. So many more lives would have been lost if it were not for these exceptional human beings.

2. The setting up of a food hub in the South Arm Hall and also the Taylors Arm Hall. Immediate donations received from the RSL Club in Nambucca Heads and through the coordinators of the South Arm Hall and Taylors Arm Hall sourced from across NSW. This Hall was integral to the welfare and mental health of those devastated by fire. Delivering food, clothes and comfort to the stricken burned out Nambucca Valley.

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

The response of Local Council was to employ a Bushfire Response Coordinator (these positions were State or Australia wide at a local level) whose position was to direct people affected to various grants and areas of help.

The reason I say 'didn't work well' is that the person employed in the Nambucca Valley had no 'on the ground' experience in dealing with traumatised individuals.

The position description had nothing to do with speaking with those affected, there were no 'needs analysis' done, no human help offered other than that of a person 'directing traffic' pointing people to other means of assistance.

Something I will acknowledge is that this person did the job, to the letter of the brief.

There needs to be at least one other position, a Liaison between community and Council, to bring the needs of community to the attention of Council and any services which can facilitate recovery.

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

Communication is the key to all of the abovementioned. The communication, to prepare, to mitigate etc.

Recovery Coordination is what I would like to address particularly.

This needs to be 'built in' to any bushfire recovery response...prior to the disaster.

There needs to be clear lines of communication directing people where to get help, this means people on the ground.

Telephones and computers will not work when a bushfire of the magnitude recently witnessed as all power poles, lines and telephone repeater stations will be burned, so preemptive strategies need to be built in to any bushfire recovery response....this is vital for the safety and wellness of those affected.

\* There needs to be a pre identified 'safe place' where people can go to get food and water, clothes and information.

\* There needs to be a satellite phone supplied to this 'safe place' for contact with family and friends

\* There needs to be accommodation pre identified for people to go to and a means of transport supplied

\* There needs to be the ability to 'roll call' residents checked against a Council held document, to help account for people.

\* There needs to be a Mental Health worker, trained in Disaster Management on the ground as soon as possible, not five months after the event.

There needs to be consistency in the supply of helpful information, with constant checking in with community to see how they are 'doing' and what they need.

Prior to any emergency a list of organisations needs to be developed, those who are able to house/accommodate displaced persons.

These organisations to actually be accessible and visible in the coming days and weeks and months following the fires.

It is senseless handing a traumatised person a piece of paper and telling them to call a phone number, in times like these following the bushfire disaster people need to be led, or walked through the doors of organisations if same organisations cannot attend the 'safe place' a Liaison person can do this.

Be prepared for people being too traumatised and in shock to find food for themselves, a Food Hub needs to be set up to meet their needs also supplying potable water (and clothing)

Volunteers need to be sourced to assist in bringing comfort to people who have been affected and who may also develop a Needs Analysis to assist with the recovery of the community.

Without an early Needs Analysis there is a real danger of Council and organisation (although meaning well) to 'support from overhead' telling

community what they need instead of asking them what they need.

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

There is a huge division in what 'charities' are handing out by way of grants and the amount of donations they have received for bushfire victims, and even these small grants require much hoop jumping in order for people to access grants/funds.

In particular St Vincent De Paul, Salvation Army and Red Cross are negligent and all have received multi-million dollars from Australians and international donors.

Red Cross has been releasing funds by way of grants and even these are less (I believe) than a very small percentage of money donated.

St Vincent De Paul approached people impacted by fires on a 'phone in, make an appointment and get a \$50 voucher for food, if you qualify' Salvation Army posted two 'ads' on Facebook to tell people how to access funds/grants- no telephones, no internet so how can fire victims access funds from them.

There appears to be a belief by these so-called charities that the funds donated 'belong' to them.

They do not, they belong to those from whose distress the funds were raised, I cannot identify a body whose job it is to oversee the distribution of donations, ensuring the timely delivery of these, to those who are so severely and tragically affected by the bushfires.

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