

**Submission Number: NND.001.00931**

**Submission Of: Tony Peck**

### Your Details

Email address:

Phone:

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? East Gippsland (S)

### Your Submission

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

Emergency workers were amazing, self sacrificing and worked tirelessly with little regard for themselves. An extraordinary effort.

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

After the fires some aspects of relief were challenging. I thought some sort of virtual queue using basic technology such as an SMS when there was someone nearly ready to see them. People lined up for extensive periods and while the Defence services and volunteers did an amazing job supporting them some simple organization like this would have made a big difference.

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

We will need more and more resources on the ground in future if climate change is not addressed.<sup>1</sup> Scientists have predicted temperatures will rise up to 4°C by the end of this century with current CO2 reduction strategies which are clearly inadequate.

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

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

Supporting material provided:

Personal Bushfire submission.pdf

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**Personal submission to the  
Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements  
Also known as Bushfires Royal Commission**

I have lived in East Gippsland for nearly 30 years. We have brought up two children here and experienced the joys of the wonderful natural environment the region offers.

We have also experienced numerous bushfires. We lived in a bush setting until three years ago. As a result I am well aware of both the preparation for each fire season, the signs of a more serious season and the stress of managing day to day when fires are burning in the region.

Without a doubt the last fire season lived up to that now overused adjective: unprecedented. The length of the season, the dryness of the landscape and ultimately the extent and ferocity of the fires left everyone in the district reeling. While we have not been directly affected by the fires as we live in a major town, we have experienced weeks of thick smoke, days of threat and danger. Our friends have had their properties burnt out, a number of acquaintances have lost their homes and close friends from Mallacoota experienced all that happened there.

During the fires we had fire refugees at our house. During the worst nights we had 9 people (and 5 dogs) staying with us. We had a young family consisting of parents and 3 year old staying for several weeks as the mother was due to have her baby and her home town, Orbost has no obstetric services available. They evacuated here shortly before the road to Orbost was closed. She safely delivered her baby on the 7th January but could not return home for another 10 days due to fire risk and smoke.

The fires were finally declared safe in March.

My concern centres on the inevitability of more fires, more often and the lack of effective action to mitigate the cause of this: unchecked global warming.

It is already clear that human induced climate change, which is now at around 1.2°C of warming is the cause of the severity and extent of these fires. Currently government policy is based around a plan to effectively allow global warming to increase to at least 3-4°C. The Federal Government does not have a plan beyond 2030 and the plan in place till then is clearly insufficient. I have little confidence that this government is serious about action. They still talk of new coal power plants and both government and opposition support new coal mines.

We will be in a dire situation if climate change is not addressed. Certainly we need to plan for the increased risk of fires. We will need substantially more resources to manage fires in future. Many areas will effectively become uninhabitable. Just as there are no-build zones around our coast due to risk of flooding, there will need to be large parts of our landscape where people cannot plan to set up home.

However the recent fires show that the problem is just too big to manage traditionally and we cannot really predict what will happen as the situation gets worse, with temperatures increasing faster than they have since humans evolved.

It was a somewhat shocking realisation that the people we sheltered during the height of the fires were not just fire refugees, but actually the first climate refugees I have encountered. I was shocked to find that my friends were being forced from their homes in an advanced country due to climate change not being addressed. I had talked in the past about an expectation that we would soon have climate refugees from Pacific Islands, little realising that our own friends living nearby would be the first such evacuees

The most critical and effective outcome of this Royal Commission will be to state that without effective urgent action on global warming we are doomed to endlessly repeating the events from last summer more and more often.

**April 2020**