

**Submission Number: NND.001.01137**

**Submission Of:**

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

**Your Submission**

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?  
In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?  
In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?  
[REDACTED]

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements  
Lodged online: <https://rcndasubmissions.lawinorder.com.au/>  
28th April, 2020  
cc. Fiona Phillips MP  
fiona.phillips.mp@aph.gov.au  
Letter of submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

This submission refers to the Terms of Reference (g) Ways in which the traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians could improve Australia's resilience to natural disasters.

As [REDACTED] for the [REDACTED], I have been researching opportunities for the family to respond to the 2019 / 2020 bushfire crisis and have sourced significant information regarding the benefits of indigenous fire management practices.

From my research, it appears that opportunities exist for indigenous fire practices to be integrated into overall fire management strategies nationally. Community groups can be trained to combine modern fire management of landscape with the cool fire burns used in cultural burning, as practiced by indigenous groups. These indigenous practices involve a complex cycle based on cultural, spiritual and scientific knowledge. These 'cool fire' burning techniques have been used extensively in the Top End landscapes. Researchers at Charles Darwin University across the last 15 years have documented a decrease by more than half the land mass being burned in annual bushfires. Experts believe the Top End model can be adapted for conditions in the southern states. The use of these cultural burns in southern states is dependent upon the needs and wishes of local communities and to date utilisation is patchy.

There is commitment through the National Bushfire Management – Policy Statement for Forests and Rangelands to promote the fire practices of First Australians, however there is significant under capacity for the task at hand, particularly in the southern states of the country. Funding needs to be made readily available for personnel to be trained in the skills of cultural burning to fill the capacity gaps.

Some of this funding can be made available through the carbon economy. These burns can utilise scientific methodologies as approved by the Department of Environment, to store carbon in the natural landscape, earning carbon credits for aboriginal community groups. The Aboriginal Carbon Foundation's work encompasses these methodologies. Their work demonstrates environmental, social and cultural benefits and plays a critical role in supporting the employment of aboriginal people.

A successful integration of indigenous fire management practices into any overall national fire plan is also dependent upon ensuring indigenous voices are represented in organisations across fire management and research. Currently there is no indigenous representation on the board of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

In summary, I would like to recommend the following be included in national fire and landscape management strategies:

- Indigenous cultural burning techniques be used in conjunction with modern fire mitigation and landscape management.

- Capacity building to train more indigenous people into the skills of cultural burning
- Funding to be made readily available to support capacity building, some of which can be provided through the carbon economy
- Indigenous voices represented in fire management and research organisations.

Yours sincerely,

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Reference

Research from Charles Darwin University

<https://www.cdu.edu.au/news/australia%E2%80%99s-big-burning-issue-tackled-north>

[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 anonymously