

Submission Number: NND.001.01209

Submission Of:

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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? Eurobodalla (A)

Your Submission

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

- phone alerts good in principle, however they were often too late, map not updated to current situation, continued to have old fires listed, the whole fire season, and old burnt out areas were still being shown as on fire. Its not real time.

- ABC radio updates were a constant companion, until they were stopped for sports broadcasting. sigh.

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

Firstly, and most importantly, not putting out small fires immediately, before they became big fires. That was the greatest error of all. NIP THE FIRES IN THE BUD. Its cheaper in the long run and better for the governments reputation and better for everyone in every way.

For instance, the Badgers Forest fire (over near the ACT) was only 4 ha when it was first seen on both the Fires Near Me app and the RFS website. WHY FOR GOODNESS SAKE wasnt it extinguished then? it was in very rough country yes it was, but because it was left to burn and grow and grow, it became huge, within about 2 days it was enormous and out of control, and it became an unprecedented event (i.e.in the middle of the night whilst people were sleeping, not during the hottest part of the day which is the usual scenario) it swept down to the coast and wiped out Quaama and Cobargo and surrounding areas, incurring loss of life and a huge loss of homes and then it joined up with other huge fires which had also been let to run and run. And, the forecast was WRONG. It was forecast the night before, that the fire would come through Wandella and Brogo much later ie on New Years Eve, a day later than it actually did, so everyone was caught napping.

There were fires raging as early as the beginning of December, that were not extinguished. You have to ask WHY NOT, WHY dont we have the right resources to do it?

Is the answer a Lack of the right resources to put out these small fires that start in rugged bush country? What does it take to put them out? bigger aerial bombers? thats my question.

And what about the ARMY do you need to bring them in at the beginning. Dont wait till its a full blown catastrophe!!!! More Helicopters with buckets are not the answer, they cant fly in windy conditions, and the buckets are tiddly little thimbles compared to the fires.

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

Aboriginal cool burning techniques asap, not in 3 years time, lets start immediately. There is certainly plenty of bush out there to start practising on.

Ban all Politicians taking annual leave HOLIDAYS over December/January and February, - IM NOT JOKING - THIS IS SERIOUS - because nothing gets done when those at the top are on holidays.

Its been the case in Australia and in Britain, everyone sits on their hands till the Prime Minister (or the Minister for Whatever the disaster is), returns from holidays, no-one seems capable (or allowed) to make any big decisions in their absence. THATS REALITY. and it cost the country a lot. It cost us time when resources could have been supplied to the fires to nip the fires in the bud, instead we had to wait till it was so bad it was impossible to deny any longer that we were in serious trouble.

Having STATE BOUNDARIES is LUDICROUS. There were fires raging in Victoria that crossed over into NSW on the far south coast, but they werent showing up on our NSW 'Fires near Me' App until they crossed the border, and then it was on for young and old. Fires coming from the North, the South and the West.

The fire maps for all states should be combined, at the very least, if you cant make it one federal Rural Fire Service, that is backed up by the Army and has paid firefighters.

Yet you can have one Federal Army, Navy Air Force and Government. I believe you can do anything, if you have the will to do it.

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

Another thing - BURNS - pain - MEDICATION - suffering - air AMBULANCES - first aid courses.

If you watched the Bawley Point RFS captain on ABC TV One plus One being interviewed by Barrie Cassidy. He risked his life and his crew to save an older couple who were burnt whilst trying to wet down animals in their wild life sanctuary. They were so badly burnt their skin was melting off them. The captain nursed the wife in his arms for hours as they waited for a helicopter to come and take them to hospital. she

asked to be let die because of the horrendous pain she was in. This was a terrible heart rending story to watch that has caused me nightmares. Here is the link:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/one-plus-one/2020-04-07/one-plus-one:-charlie-magnuson/12130808?nw=0>

Helicopter ambulances - look into that too please, obviously not enough of them BUT ... they cant fly in some fire conditions, so other options need to be considered. In the country we are remote and there is much distance to be covered by ambulances.

Is there a case for having stepped up FIRST AID courses for Fire Brigade volunteers in every brigade,?
and for morphine or pain medication, to be available to the brigades during these extreme fire events? perhaps in the vehicles or in locked first aid kits.?

or some kind of spray on pain relief?

But ignoring or denying CLIMATE CHANGE is probably this Liberal Governments' politicians greatest SIN, or misjudgement, or ignorance? or criminal negligence? the history books will tell the story.

Australians want action on climate change, and we also WANT ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF COOL BURNING TECHNIQUES APPLIED AND IMPLEMENTED ALL OVER AUSTRALIA. FAST. to try to avoid another horrendous fire season next summer, and let me tell you, rainfall is already lower so far this year, than it was last year by this time.

Oh yes about the MONEY - dollars \$, grants, hand outs, all the money stuff, its one thing to make a big fuss saying you are going to give away this and that, (so you get public approval) but the honest, ethical thing is to actually PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS, loosen the purse strings and actually give it to the people who qualify and need it, not hold onto it for months while they live in a tent or a shed or a caravan and have no fencing. Employ more staff in bureaucracy to get things done.

Personally, we evacuated 6 times. It seemed like THE FIRES REARED THEIR DRAGON LIKE FLAMES AT US around each weekend. We had moved to ██████████ last year from ██████████ thinking it would be safer, but it wasnt. Highways were closed over and over again. The historical tourist town of ██████████ was even closed. We had to sleep in our car several times, on different occasions we stayed with friends, or stayed in a motel, then with relatives and even faced the fire front full on as it roared towards those sitting in their cars at the Bermagui waterfront, only to be saved at the very last moment by a wind change. We never unpacked the car. We lost the food in our fully stocked fridge, we had dirty filthy ash all over our car as we tried to sleep in the car with our dogs, we had filthy ash all over the house roof and in our water tanks. I didnt claim money from the govt for this. I didnt claim insurance for anything either, but mentally Ive been traumatised by these fires, worst in our lifetime, so far.

Insurance companies like NRMA should be held to account, and shamed, those companies who do their best to avoid paying claims. They are great at advertising how much they want to HELP you, but look for any excuse/loophole to reject a claim. Im aware of two NRMA policy holders who had their claims rejected. Hence the need for pro bono solicitors to step up, to fight these companies on behalf of victims to get justice. Thats greed and its unethical and should be stamped out, as it was with the flood victims, who were fleeced by insurance companys 20years ago.

AND send your COMMISSIONER and some staff out in his/her car to come down and talk to the Bushfire Relief Co-ordinators, so you can ask them personally who and where the help is needed most, and what needs to happen. Those co-ordinators are at the COAL FACE. They meet the people who lost everything every day. Working tirelessly for no pay, day and night, under huge workload, generously giving their time. Try the Quaama Co-ordinator for a start.

Good Luck and thanks for asking.

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