

Submission Number: NND.001.01244

Submission Of: Judith Anne Bourne

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? I lived in an area affected by bushfires and was evacuated, but did suffer personal or financial loss

Where do you live? Eurobodalla (A)

Your Submission

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

Volunteer firefighters were fantastic saving lives and bush - exposing themselves to real danger even though very poorly resourced. The ABC was as usual fantastic, connecting communities, were the main source of information for everyone.

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

Long delays in responding to the bushfires, inadequate equipment, people left to defend their homes, inadequate personnel dedicated/trained to fight fires, failure to heed warnings that this season would highly likely to be a catastrophic bushfire season and so lack of preparation on the part of the federal government. Large sectors of the populations on the south of the country exposed to long periods of exposure to toxic smoke, with lack of protective equipment - even for the fire fighter. We were reliant on overseas equipment such as helicopters with personnel - who were apparently disorganised and hence ineffective at times. We need our own dedicated fire fighting force with adequate equipment and resources, including capacity to plan to mitigate future bush 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?

Most important for the government to acknowledge that the climate has changed, that fires will become more catastrophic so the government needs to urgently do all it can as soon as possible to reduce our CO2 emissions, that is, to initially prevent new coal mining and gas exploration proceeding, stop subsidising these industries and promote and fund alternative energy source.

Prepare for the next catastrophic and prolonged fire seasons by planning well ahead for the next catastrophic fires, probably occurring earlier in the season and lasting longer. Increased resourcing of personnel and appropriate equipment, eg helicopters is critical.

Increase funding for ABC so the invaluable service they provide during disasters doesn't impact of their normal programming and operation.

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

Don't increase prescribed burning of remote bush just to give a false sense of security. Prescribed burning in areas other than surrounding assets, such as dwellings, has been shown to be ineffective by scientists at preventing spread of catastrophic fires and is discounted by fire chiefs as a panacea. This practice further devastates critical habitat for our many species now faced with extinction. I live in Canberra have a house at Congo - neither place was listed but I was affected by the fires both financially and like many others my health has been compromised by exposure to smoke.

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