

**Submission Number: NND.001.01257**

**Submission Of:**

**Your Details**

Email address:

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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? Port Macquarie-Hastings (A)

**Your Submission**

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

The response of fire fighters both volunteer and professional, once the fires were underway.

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

I feel that heavy reliance on volunteers to cope with the intense and quick uprise of the fires around Port Macquarie was basically ridiculous and some human mistakes were made because of this. The fires that burnt around Lake Innes area that killed so many koalas should not have happened nor spread to the degree that it was.

Better technology is needed and wifi in the area is not perfect even on a good day. Mobile phone service does not even work west of Wauchope on most ordinary mobile phones.

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

While it is good to have the volunteer army, there needs to be a highly trained group of people in each area of Australia where fires are a possibility. The volunteers can train with or without them but should be willing to work with the expert group on fires such as we had in Port Macquarie.

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

When the plans of response are worked out, please remember to take into the types of forests that were affected and what were not. Around the Lake Innes State Conservation areas were burnt out, the main areas destroyed were the Eucalyptus forested areas. In the middle of these fire areas were rainforest patches that did not burn or only suffered slow cool floor fires that did not destroy these subtropical rainforests. Obviously this is because most rainforest plants do not have as many oils in the leaves like the Eucalyptus leaves. Also since decomposing fungus has a function of decomposition on the rainforest floor, there is rarely the same kind of fuel build up as Eucalypt forests. In these rainforests, traditional Indigenous burning would not be relevant and would damage the fine balance of the forest ecosystems. The fact that many Forestry forest plantations were monoculture impacted on the level of destruction. Finally, the cuts in funding for the Departments of Forests and National Parks and Wildlife in NSW but restructures and cutting of staff over recent years have meant that forests of all kinds in the Hastings Valley have not been looked after, and many of them suffer the impacts of excess recreational damaging usage as well as the disruption of ecosystems by drug plantations etc. There are so many things that could help these forests produce money, like carefully planned tourism similar to Tasmania, so that there can be more staff looking after them, yet the morale of workers in forestry and NPWS is low and very thin on the ground. Again a huge reliance on volunteers. The balance needs to be restored so that there are more trained and knowledgeable staff are in charge of our forests and national parks.

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