

**Submission Number: NND.001.01308**

**Submission Of: Daniel Jones**

### 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? The Shed of Hope Inc

### Your Submission

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

To be honest it was lacking. The feedback from clients was heartbreaking.

I'm voicing the thoughts of fire-affected clients that feel its a waste of time contacting you as they believe nothing will happen or change.

You will see me use DW, meaning Disaster Welfare meetings.

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

Many felt that it was information overload given many where still in deep shock at the time.

Many felt at the meetings they were given sugarcoated answers.

A lot of misinformation was given by different state departments. People would be told to contact a certain department, only to be told to contact someone else. Many people would ask questions only to be told the wrong thing or nothing at all.

Staff from different government departments and NGOs gave misinformation on different things.

Lack of support, compassion and empathy at meetings towards fire affected. I went to a lot of meetings and it was just typical political

answers, answers that did not deal with the question asked. Many times did I witness RFS not answer questions that were asked, either saying they can't answer or just flob people off.

One example was a resident stopped an RFS Truck on the road and said "I'm staying to fight the fire, can you please dose my house down" only to be told by the driver "we were told not to use water" so they went up to his house and raked the leaf and small branches away, then they got in their truck and left.

When asked why the RFS refused to answer.

A second example is someone asked the RFS why didn't any units come and get water from his mandatory water tank that was to made available in accordance to LGA zoning rules for high-risk areas for fire fighting. This resident informed RFS his tank was full and they never once went and got water from it. When he asked why they did not answer him.

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

The government need to learn from this so when we have such a major incident they can be better prepared with straight to the point answers.

Months after the fires DW needs to come back into affected communities and meet with them to see where people are at.

As for the privacy laws, they need to be changed in disaster situations so on the ground disaster based charities can find more fire-affected people that are in need and offer ongoing support.

A good example is Blazeaid and The Shed of Hope Inc. They are the grass-root support for fire-affected, while other mainstream charities like Samaritans Purse and Team Rubicon come in and spend a month or so then go, Blaze Aid and The Shed of Hope and others like them are there with the fire affected for the long term.

More support needs to be given to charities like this as they become personally involved with many clients trusting them over mainstream and government departments for ongoing support in many different ways.

The government need to share affected residents' info with them so the affected can get more ongoing support.

I know the RFS need to give updates, but many people at the first few DW community meetings really don't give a shit about what is happening 1500km away, they want to know what is happening in their community. One DW meeting I went to lasted an hour, and 20 minutes of that was talking about what was happening at the other end of the state. Now I know it's about the RFS explaining resources, but the community doesn't want to hear about resources in other areas, they want to know what the government is going to do in their own community.

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

Yes, RENTERS. People renting are falling in the cracks.

Now in this 2019-2020 fire season, millions of dollars were donated to the Australian Red Cross and others.

Now property renters lose everything as well but get left out. Property owners get grants to rebuild (both from NGO's and government) and those renting are just as affected and out of pocket and then have to find a new rental property.

I believe the federal government's Centrelink \$1000 payment (and \$400 for kids) needs to be raised to \$5000 for fire-affected (and \$1000 per kid). They have lost everything and \$1000 does not go far or the \$400 per kid.

I wish to see the governments at both levels introduce a renter grant after a declared disaster where anyone renting that loses their rented dwelling be given a rental grant of up to \$250 per week for six months, or the same amount to buy a decent caravan

Now because of the major scale of this fire and much money was donated, there are other times when a fire is declared a disaster on a smaller

scale, for example, the February 2019 Tabulam fires. Now property owners from that could apply for rebuild grants, no big handouts from Australian Red Cross but they still got the rebuild grants, but renters got no help other than the \$1000 from Centrelink.

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