



Royal Commission
into National Natural
Disaster Arrangements

Submission Cover Sheet

This cover sheet has been prepared by the Commission's public contact team to accompany a submission.

Person completing cover sheet

1. **Staff member name** [REDACTED]
2. **Date completed** 26.03.2020
3. **This cover sheet has been completed based on:**
 - details contained in the submission
 - a phone call with the person making the submission
 - an email from the person making the submission
 - Other (provide details) -

Submission details

4. **Full name** [REDACTED]
5. **Email** [REDACTED]
6. **Telephone** [REDACTED]
7. **Preferred method of contact**
8. **Is the submission based on:**
 - primarily based on their personal situation.
 - primarily based on their professional knowledge, qualifications or experience, or on behalf of a group or organisation
9. **If the person is making the submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation:**

If the submission based on personal experience:

10. **What was their personal situation in relation to the 2019-20 Bushfires? Choose all that apply.**
 - were not living in an area affected by bushfire
 - were in an area affected by bushfires but was not evacuated, and didn't suffer personal or financial loss
 - lived in an area affected by bushfires and was evacuated, but didn't suffer personal or financial loss
-

- lived in an area affected by bushfires and was evacuated, and I suffered personal or financial loss
- part of the emergency response as a fire fighter on the ground
- part of the emergency response as an aerial fire fighter
- part of the emergency response as health professional
- part of the emergency response as an Australian Defence Force member
- part of the emergency response as a Commonwealth or State government employee
- assisted the emergency response as a community support volunteer
- assisted the emergency recovery (i.e. after the fire event) as a community support volunteer
- Other

11. Where does the person live:

Local Government Area	Choose an item.
Town name	Grantville
Post code	3984

If the submission is based on professional experience

12. What is your area of expertise? Please choose all that apply.

- Emergency/disaster response and/or management
- Environment/land management
- Land use, planning, building standards
- Impacts of changes in climatic conditions
- Wildlife conservation
- Traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians
- Community welfare
- Other

All submissions

13. Does the person agree to their submission being published?

- Yes, agree to the submission being published in their name
 - Yes, agree to the submission being published anonymously
 - No, does not agree to the submission being published
-

Fires at Grantville Friday and Saturday Feb 1 &2 2019

On Friday February 1, my wife, [REDACTED] rang 000 at 11034 reporting a small fire in the Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve towards Glen Forbes. She was advised that it had already been reported. At that stage the fire could easily have been handled by two people with shovels and a knapsack with 25 litres of water.

My son, [REDACTED], walked into the reserve to find the exact location of the fire and to guide CFA units when they arrived. A fire truck came down Stanley Road but went away when the crew discovered that the gate on the fire track was locked and they had left the key at the fire station. My wife again rang 000 at 12013 and advised that if the CFA came to us, we could show them how to access the fire

Some time later a police car arrived with a panicking and aggressive officer who jumped up and down and yelled at us incoherently about our son being in the bush. He was unable to give any advice about what was keeping the CFA from attending. I phoned [REDACTED] and said the cop wanted him out of there – he asked “where is the CFA?” I said I had no idea but he’d better come back to the farm. Neighbours arrived with some of their animals because our property management provided a safe area around the main shed. Forest Fire Management also arranged for a small dozer to be unloaded here and the contactor was happy to leave his truck where it was safe from the fire. Eventually, after a wind change sent the fire towards properties in the Adams Estate, the fire burned out

On Saturday morning we received a phone call from a Glen Forbes resident advising us to leave because the CFA was about to light fires to burn more bush and with the wind direction it was likely to head straight for our property. Looking towards Glen Forbes, we then saw various bursts of smoke presumably from incendiary devices used to start the fires.. The Saturday fires were much hotter and more threatening than on Friday.

In the afternoon CFA officers said they were planning to cut a fire break through scrub on our property to protect the second house on the farm. But before they started that they told [REDACTED] they had been called away and “You are on your own”. All the fire trucks and the D9 dozer raced off up Stanley Road and the crews sat at the Stanley Road intersection with McGrady Road (where they could see nothing).

It’s difficult to understand why this blaze was not tackled in a timely manner – unless brigades are instructed not to extinguish small fires, but to wait for them to develop into better photo opportunities and publicity on nightly television news broadcasts. During publicity about the fires, CFA presented a myth that the Grantville reserve was impenetrable bushland when in reality it is easily accessible coastal scrub.

Another possible explanation for dysfunction within emergency services is the increase in layers of bureaucracy which has diminished individual responsibilities. Emergency management used to be a Government Department, with a Minister ultimately responsible.. Then an emergency management commissioner was appointed, followed by An Inspector General for Emergency Management - additional layers of bureaucracy which have done nothing to enhance service delivery.

Messages from the CFA to residents and the media appeared to be designed to create panic rather than inform the community. Residents in Tenby Point were urged to evacuate even though there was little prospect of the fire reaching them. The CFA said ” Firefighters have not been able to stop the spread of the fire due to the inaccessible country. “

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [RCNDA - Submissions](#)
Subject: fires submission - [REDACTED]
Date: Tuesday, 24 March 2020 12:07:04 PM
Attachments: [Grantville fires.doc](#)

[REDACTED]

The Inquiry into this year's Australian bushfires is unlikely to result in any meaningful improvement in community protection unless the political obsession with 'Hazard reduction' is discounted. Some only see the bush as a hazard instead of recognising it as an asset.

Bushland does not suddenly decide to spontaneously burst into flames. There is a cause of ignition. Simply burning more bush does not make the country any safer – there were many instances this year and in previous years where fires raged through areas which had previously burned.

The removal of understory results in drier conditions and makes land more fire prone. Much of the damage was caused by grassfires and forest fires rather than bushfires and in the right conditions even bare earth burns as oxygen is sucked from the soil.

Our experience with fires in the Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve on February 1 and 2, 2019, demonstrated that there appears to be a policy of waiting for fires to become large and threatening, rather than acting swiftly to put them out. The focus should be putting fires out before they become raging infernos.

I have attached an email I sent to the Chair of the Country Fire Authority about the fires. A senior CFA officer visited us to discuss the matters raised and he accepted the facts detailed in the email, agreeing that lessons had been learned and changes would be made.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10