



Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Submission Form

Please complete this form if you would like to provide input or comments about coordination, preparedness for, response to and recovery from the 2019-20 'Black Summer' bushfires.

Personal and Background Information

1. Full Name **Catherine Lawler OAM**

2. Email

[REDACTED]

3. Mobile/Telephone

[REDACTED] : [REDACTED]

4. What is your preferred method of contact if we want to follow up with you?

Landline phone would be the best. As that way you will get to speak to Catherine.

The phone still hasn't been fixed since bushfire, the landline number is diverted to a mobile which is plugged into an aerial on the roof through a window.

It is possible to leave a message and Catherine will get to you. Or leave a time that you will call back.

Otherwise ring the mobile number supplied and a time can be arranged to contact Catherine that suits both.

The email supplied is Catherine's daughter – [REDACTED].

5. The Commission would like to understand the views of community groups based on their respective experiences and background.

- Please select Option 1 if you are providing input and comments primarily based on your personal situation.
- Please select Option 2 if you are providing input and comments primarily based on your professional knowledge, qualifications or experience, or on behalf of a group or organisation

Option 1: Based on your personal situation, please complete the following.

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

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

I live in an area affected by bushfires and was not evacuated – I suffered personal and financial loss.

- b. Where do you live? Please provide your Local Government Area, town name and post code.

Local Government Area	Eurobodalla
Town name	Bodalla
Post code	2545

I live on a property – not in a town.

Property name: [REDACTED]

Property address: [REDACTED]

I live in the locality of [REDACTED].

Near Nerrigundah on the South Coast of NSW.

Option 2: Based on your knowledge, qualifications or **experience**, or your role representing a group or organisation, 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**
-

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

The response has been wonderful, from firstly the Army, but especially from Blaze Aid and Donated Fodder Supplies.

The Forestry Commission have been great making roads accessible for Private Property owners.

Rural Assistance Authority were outstanding also Local Land Service.

Fire and Rescue plus a Eurobodalla Shire lady came and assessed the destroyed buildings and gave lots of good advice.

As far we are concerned the Red Cross have not contacted us.

6. In your experience, of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

There was no response.

Neighbours and friends arrived after cutting their way through.

If anyone (police/RFS/etc) did call in there was no indication ie: a written notice etc that they had called.

When the army finally arrived 14/1/2019 - they were shocked at the devastation and returned day after day to try and help. They are the ones who delivered supplies of water and food.

To the date, 3 months after – we have not been approached by either local Police or our local RFS.

On going issues with communication between various agencies also State and local governments.

To be told 3 months later by the local council, that you are expected to pay your rates on time as your property wasn't recorded as being destroyed is unacceptable.

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

We need to do lots more to reduce fuel load in our forests, National Parks and on Private Property.

Many local fire brigades hurry to put fires out when sometimes it would be best to let it burn under good conditions and just watch the fire and let it burn.

Sometimes it take a considerable time to obtain a permit to do a hazard reduction burn on Private Property and in many cases an opportunity is lost.

The Australian bush must be managed much better.

Turn our forests, National Parks etc int other asset they were instead of the liability they are.

Local knowledge is largely ignored and that is a mistake.

The Australian bush cannot be managed by locking it up.

When the bush is not burned by mosaic burns, there is less food for the grazing native animals and the they are forced to come out onto cleared farming and grazing properties.

They just cannot exist in country knee deep in leaves and bark.

Because we farmers and graziers are so restricted by laws and cannot use fire like we used to there are nothing like the wild flowers that used to be when I was young.

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

Catherine's words:

Based on my experience in Environment/land management, wildlife conservation etc I would ask that more notice of local knowledge and experience be taken.

I cannot legally sell fence posts or firewood from my property.

Well now it is all destroyed, For What?! Use some common sense.

We need to manage the Australian bush, but not by locking it up.

However, there was not stopping this fire. The bare ground just burnt.

Because of the drought, everything was so terribly dried out.

Our very well maintained stock yards all caught fire at once, not one post or one rail at a time.

At our own expense we keep the old logging roads, in the forest surrounding this property, cleared, open, but this time 31/12/2019 nothing worked.

I would like to supply further details about myself:

Catherine Lawler (nee - Carden) OAM for services to Heritage and Environment

DOB : ██████████

██

██████████ is near Nerrigundah - both were totally devastated by fire 31/12/2019

NSW National Parks & Wildlife NPWLS Advisory Committee - approx. 15 years service.

Eurobodalla Shire Hertiage Advisory Committee - approx. 5 years service.

ATHRA - Australian Trail Horse Riders Association - approx. 25 years

Pony Club Australia - Instructor / Examiner. Zone Selector/committee - approx. 25 years.

History/background cont.

Catherine's father - AB Carden was employed by the SW Bate Estate as overseer/head stockman.

He looked after and managed a vast amount of land/farms, leases/bush and stock.

From Donga (now owned by Catherine as part of [REDACTED]) on the Tuross River to and including Belowra (also destroyed/devastated by fire on 31/12/2019).

He and his family including his wife [REDACTED] (who lived, with her pioneering family on the Deua River at Canoolie).

Their son [REDACTED] and daughter [REDACTED], worked and lived on the land. They farmed and raised cattle.

He purchased [REDACTED] in 1947 and later other adjoining property/farms Donga, Wattlegrove etc. It has been in the family since then and will remain so.

Catherine has a vast amount of knowledge in both experience and memory.

As previously stated, communication with the farm is not straight forward since the fire - but can be sorted.

The telephone is not working properly yet but is being worked on and will hopefully be restored soon.

Clearly the best option is for Catherine to be interviewed by the Royal Commission, if at all possible. There is so much local knowledge to be offered.

If this is an option in these uncertain times, please contact her on the landline [REDACTED] and leave a message which will be returned.

OR contact her daughter [REDACTED] : [REDACTED] OR on the email supplied.

We can work out a time that is best to ring and be sure that Catherine is near the phone.

Do you intend to provide supporting material?

Yes

No

If you are providing any supporting material, please include it with your Submission if possible. If you need to send it separately (e.g. if you make a Submission over the phone), please ensure supporting material can be clearly identified as relating to your Submission by including your name or other identifier so that it can be considered with your Submission.

9. Do you agree to your submission being published? (Mandatory)

Yes, I agree to my submission being published in my name

Yes I agree to my submission being published anonymously

No I don't agree to my submission being published

Once you have completed this form, email it to rcnda.submissions@royalcommission.gov.au or print the form and post it to the Royal Commission at:

National Natural Disaster Royal Commission

Locked Bag 2000

Manuka ACT 2603



Photo taken Monday 30/12/2019 6.00pm from veranda of [REDACTED] Cottage.

Fire at: Badja Forest Rd Countegany – this would be the fire that destroys Belowra & Cobargo



Photos taken Tuesday 31/12/2019 3.00am from veranda of [REDACTED] Cottage [REDACTED]



Photo taken Monday 30/12/2019 6.00pm from veranda of [REDACTED] Cottage.

Within the next 12 hours this fire would arrive & destroy everything within its path.

By 10.00am the next day the fire front had passed, they were in darkness. Total devastation.

Fire at: Big Belimbla Creek – this would be the fire that destroys [REDACTED]

Photos also show the amount of open bare ground between bush & farm infrastructure – yards, sheds, homes etc. Open paddocks, no pasture as drought had taken its toll.



[REDACTED] Homestead (early 1800's)

Destroyed within a couple of hours on 31/12/2019

Photo taken New Years Day 2020