

16<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## **The Royal Commission into the Black Summer Fires 2020**

**Attention: Air Marshall Mark Binskin AC**

**Dear Sir**

As a Victorian citizen I along with most of the Australian population watched Black Summer Fires, start, then growing and finally being put out with great efforts from many various authorities, playing many separate roles across the Australian landscape.

Watching this from a distance, I could see the rising crescendo of urgency, from small isolated fires, growing into major disasters, I wondered why it took so long to involve the Federal Government, then I realized we have only a very minor amount of suitable Aeroplanes and helicopters that could be used by our military air force, they could only sit back and watch. Our military planes are not purpose built for firefighting.

I wondered why we couldn't have a federal aviation fire organization, that can cross borders and be available to remote areas, similar to the royal flying Doctor Service which has been servicing remote areas for many decades.

I know we are blessed to have many great fire services in every state doing their best, but we need to give them the tools to do a better job.

With a Federal Fire Organization, we could move quicker to extinguish small fires in remote inaccessible terrain before they could link up with other small fires and create major fire front.

In Victoria we pay a fire levy regardless if you live in a populated city or a remote country town. One way to finance this organization would be that every state contributes through the Fire levy currently in place. Each state can contribute according to their population.

Another means to finance this organization would be to redirect monies that are currently paid to overseas contractors who fly in during our summer season to various states with mechanics, pilots and backup personnel. Bringing with them helicopters and aeroplanes, this is an ongoing annual cost which will no doubt increase with time.

Due to the climate change our summer fire season is starting early and finishing later, our northern hemisphere contractors will no doubt be under pressure to stay in their homeland

and assist their fire fighters as their summer fire season will also be extended. This could leave us undefended and vulnerable.

This Federal Fire Organization should be allowed to use existing military and civil airports at not cost anywhere in Australia and integrated with local fire authority's buildings and communications. We could even benefit by sharing costs with our neighbour New Zealand, which I am sure will see the benefit of having a competent air fire fighting service a few hours away.

With the climate change it might be sooner than later.

In keeping with the terms of reference this would improve Australia's preparedness, resilience, and response to natural disasters across all levels of Government

I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to input my thoughts which as a growing nation will saves lives in the future battles, we will no doubt have to confront.

Yours faithfully

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