



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 [REDACTED]
2. Email [REDACTED]
3. Mobile/Telephone [REDACTED]
4. What is your preferred method of contact if we want to follow up with you?

phone

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

- a. Please select **Option 1 if** you are providing input and comments primarily based on your personal situation.
- b. 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.

- a. 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
We were evacuated a number of times

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

Local Government Area	Bega Valley
Town name	Bermagui
Post code	2546

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
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Input / Comments

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

The first call I received which told me to evacuate.

The fires near me app.

The RFS and emergency services were amazingly good

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

The Defence personnel were good once they arrived but they were too slow in getting here. More than anything else, the arrival of the big army vehicles was a big morale boost. But it should have happened sooner. When you are in that emergency like that you feel incredibly vulnerably so it was important to have morale boost with the arrival of the army.

There were problems with mobile service. When I was at the surf club, the communication between the emergency services and the people there wasn't able to happen well. People from the surf life savers were relaying information but that was all we had. One of the loud speakers wasn't even working properly. It wasn't easy to know what was going on. Communication is something that needs to be done better.

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

There needs to be a broad input from lots of different parties, including the RFS and many others, and go forward on that basis. We need to go forward is by talking to the RFS and other experts, and get them making the decisions. It shouldn't be so political. There needs to be a much broader approach to the fires. It is incumbent on government in a non-partisan way to get together and form a broad and focused look on how we go forward. It is a very scary thing that none of us want to go through again. Where we live there is forest that goes all the way down the coast, we really have to look at how we protect all aspects of life through this region.

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

Once the army came on board, including with several helicopters and other aircraft, we did feel more confident. I just want to underline that even for those people who didn't "lose" anything it was an extremely distressing situation. It was horrible. People at the surf club were all just frightened and it was awful. It is a terrible circumstance that we need to do more to ward off. This has to do with climate change, with governments not following through. We have to look at this and do something about it, by looking to the experts and what they have to say. We can't carry on like this or it will happen again. Australia is a country that has fire but not like this, I knew people who were fighting fires for 4-5 hours. Afterwards I was part of a group where we would go and do wildlife feeding. All the animals had nowhere to go and nothing to eat. Our area was evacuated 4 times and the smoke was so bad I just had to leave. Bermagui was without water or sewage etc so you couldn't stay anyway.

One other thing that I have heard, that at one point when we were at the surf club, there was such a concern that the fire was going to get to Bermagui that we were going to have to end up in the sea. That would have been absolutely awful. If that is true, and I'm sure it is, then that is just catastrophic.

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.

10. 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
