



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

[REDACTED]
Verbal submission. Form completed by [REDACTED] 28/04/2020.

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

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

Local Government Area	Mid-Western Regional
Town name	Charbon
Post code	2848

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?

Most areas of the response worked well.

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

Extreme number of out of area volunteers were present leading to less than perfect utilisation of resources due to lack of knowledge. For most part teams worked well together. No serious criticism. Already discussed on a regional level.

One issue that wasn't perfect was that we sometimes got called to spot fires well away from front line when there were actually crews already there, travel time means wasted resources.

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?

Universal concern is impediments from local councils about native vegetation preservation orders. Lack of fire breaks. Needs to be an amendment that allows at least a 200 metre fire break zone in rural communities. This would allow fire crews to control situations. Councils should be empowered to assist and enforce fire ground reductions - some communities grow excessive fuel loads for privacy or environmental reasons. Even ankle high grass and leaf litter can make a fire unchallengeable, let alone vegetation that is shoulder high.

There needs to be a balance of protecting environment vs preventing fire. As a personal example, when I was fighting the Upper Turon fire we had to bulldoze a fire track to get access and the local Landcare person considered that we were environmental vandals, but doing this saved a large swathe of national park.

There needs to be a policy or workable access around all national parks to have perimeter access so outbreaks can be contained without need to rapidly mobilise earthmoving equipment. (National parks, state forests, recreational areas). Funding to ensure that distribution power lines clearances maintained as fire breaks.

There should be massive penalties for arson. This firebugs plead for sympathy but they get out to try to avoid consequences. Treated as would be murderers/manslaughters.

We should have catchments that collect floodwater and pump it back inland, we have a 500 metre river flowing out to sea in flood but also extreme drought inland.

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

They should put up a monument to the American aerial firefighters from Coulson's who lost their lives near Cooma when their plane came down.

10. 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.

11. 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

