



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

Phone. Reference number for submission can be emailed to be though.

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 – Lived in the area affected by bushfires, stayed to defend and suffered financial loss

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

Local Government Area	Choose an item.
Town name	YOWRIE
Post code	2550

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?

- 24/48 hours before hand local fire brigade called let locals know what was happening.
- Midnight an automated message from the fire service was sent.

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

- Whilst the automated message from the fire service was good for me not for the majority of people as this was far too late as they were not prepared like I was.
- Cobargo lost lots of homes by evacuating people. I think by evacuating a lot of houses and people from Cobargo was a complete over reaction and therefore took away the real need in Bega.

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?

Preparation

- Have a comprehensive back burning program like the Indigenous culture would do on a regular basis. They need to keep the fuel loads down as these loads hadn't been burned since the 70's. Need to ensure the fuel loads are reduced in towns as well as in rural areas.
- People need to be educated and aware that this back burning is essential in keeping the fuel loads down, too many people are ignorant and complain when there is smoke from back burning. They need to take responsibility to be prepared for these situations. Councils need to assist people and make them aware.
- People need to ensure they are bushfire prepared by clearing around their properties, putting in simple sprinkle systems, having water available.

Mitigation

- About being prepared, taking responsibility for yourself and have no fuel loads around their homes.

Response and Recovery

- There was no response.
- On NYE only at midnight were people were taken out of the area. People were seriously injured.
- On my property I only saw rescue personnel 8 days after the fires and a fire inspector came on the 9th day.
- On the next morning after the fires came through I went on my quad bike to see the damage. I came accross an old couple on the road who had lost everything . They had walked for 6kms and all they had was the clothes on their backs. The lady had serious burns and there was no

one around. I took them to my neighbour who had a ute. He took them to seek medical attention in Cobargo.

-The roads were blocked and the police didn't get through until afternoon. The authorities were not prepared for this.

- Government were not prepared for this. They needed more air support straight away to suppress the fires.

- Our Military needs to step in the defend Australians, why were they not there sooner. They need a rapid response troop trained in defending bushfires.

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

-I live in the Bega Valley District at the north end and have been preparing for years for this and been warning people for months this was going to happen. Some people took my advice and were very appreciative, others not and they lost properties. I only lost 4 buildings.

- I was fully prepared with water, tanks, sprinkler systems on the house, shutters on windows, sand bags in doorways. Also made sure I had clean areas around my buildings and nothing flammable lying around.

- I personally know of 3 people who died from the fires which is extremely sad.

- People need to wake up and be prepared and not think that nothing is going to happen to them and expect emergency services are going to come to their aid. People need to take responsibility for themselves and be prepared by removing fuel loads from around their homes.

- New settlers to the area have no clue on how to live here in the bush, its complacency and ignorance that didn't help.

- In the old days you could just contact the local fire chief about burning off. Now this is so much more difficult.

- The IFS say they have no resources to do the back burning . They let the fuel loads build up too much which narrows the times of when the burning could be done.

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
