



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** Howard Emanuel

2. **Email** [REDACTED]

3. **Mobile/Telephone** [REDACTED]

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

Would like reference number sent to email address but main follow up if required by 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

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

Local Government Area	Choose an item.
Town name	Wandella
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?

Initially receiving of text messages through the RFS.

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

- Immediately no notifications in any shape or form 24 hours before the fires.
- Post after being told to leave our property we were told to report to Cobargo fire station. They said it was absolutely vital that we did. We proceeded to the station where we were met with a laxidazical response. There were vast amounts of smoke following the progress of the fire and it was a very emotional time and what we needed was emotional support, which we didn't get.
- Relationship with the Forestry Cooperation who manage the fire tracks deteriorated and there was much discourse and it was appalling about getting anything done. We had to contact a member of parliament before anything would be done.

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

- The re -resourcing of land management agencies.
- In the forests there needs to be an overview of what has been removed in the last 4-5 years taking into account the increase in population, climate change and get back to square one and then put it back together. They also need to take into account human and mechanical resources of removal in these areas.

Mitigation

- They need professional firer fighter crews on the ground on a full time basis designated during the fire season. This can be based on experience and can be deployed in other roles in the off season, this is beyond vounteers.

Response

- This was the hottest fire on record and the Bega Valley Shire was destroyed in 2 days. Why did in 2-3 days when it was in a managable state, didn't they see a resource imput was needed. Through investigation fire suppression activivites could have been done sooner than they did when this was manageable.

Recovery

- This was excellent, our Local MP was wonderful and this came out in the full. Our Mayor of Bega Valley Shire was great also and the Red Cross and St Vincents De Paul. The evacuation centre was great providing us with cooked meals, clothing, emotional comfort and where there was a sense of comrardery with the RFS and everyone there.

- The setting up of emergency relief centres was good.
- Although on one day we were promised a bus would be leaving Bermagui waiting to take us to visit our property. I arrived to then be told this was not happening. This was very disappointing and with no explanation. We didn't get to our property until after 8 days.

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

- Our relationship with the Forestry Cooperation is very distressing whilst living on our 100 acre property. We didn't have an opportunity to stay and defend our property as this was too dangerous the only opportunity was to leave.
- There had been no maintenance to our road only in November 2015 when a grater arrived. We called and spoke to the office in charge if we wanted anything removed from our roads to be told we would have to do this ourselves and to designated standards. This is a 2km road and my wife and I are in our 60s. This is something we shouldn't have to do ourselves.
- In 2016 the drainage over the road was blocked and deteriorated and they ignored us when we contacted them to fix this. We rang a member of parliament to assist. We then received a letter which was very antagonistic in nature saying that maintenance is only done on priority access.
- It was been 4 months since the bushfires and still no access to our property which is on [REDACTED], Wandella and we have no idea when this will be done.
- We have applied for a scheme to get the land cleared and temporary bridge constructed. The scheme will probably cease by the time they get around to us. The downsizing of agencies within the state has not helped. Tracks and accesses have been downgraded. Evil of privatisation. Mitigation of risk to community is appalling. This is madness and it has to cease, there is too much personal loss and not caring for natural land resources.
- The NSW government watched the fires grow with no suppressive activities. They have something to answer for, they have a responsibility to the people.

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
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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

