



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** **Dr George Carayannopoulos**

2. **Email**

[REDACTED]

3. **Mobile/Telephone**

[REDACTED]

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

Email and phone are both fine

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
Post code

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 most effective part of the disaster response in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland occurred at the state levels. The states were well prepared with appropriate structures to support the acute crisis phase as well as into the early stages of recovery.

In all of the states this was built on having a strong and capable emergency management workforce (paid and volunteer) with key clear training, protocols and procedures as well as support from key government agencies and clear messaging to residents.

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

Having researched natural disaster responses and published a book in this area (Disaster Management in Australia) <https://www.routledge.com/Disaster-Management-in-Australia-Government-Coordination-in-a-Time-of-Carayannopoulos/p/book/9781138482593> my comments are based on the unique nature of crisis management in terms of government responsibilities. Large-scale natural disasters are a significant test of how effectively governments and the public sector respond to adversity. This occurs against a backdrop in Australia where citizens' trust in government continues to decline.

The public retains high expectations of government's ability to plan, prepare and respond to disasters. Crises are also occurring in a context where changes in the public sector mean that whole of government approaches are seen as an imperative in the management of crises.

The delineation of responsibility between levels of government is one of the key complexities in disaster management arrangements. One of the most problematic parts of the response to the 2019-2020 event relates to coordination between state and federal government agencies and the ability to effectively integrate this support during the acute crisis phase. This has been a typical and enduring issue in Australian disaster management.

Under Australia's federal system, emergency management has always been the domain of state governments with the exception of national resources such as the ADF and Disaster Recovery Funding arrangements. The delineation was established through the constitution and provides for state based management of disaster events. Disaster management arrangements have largely remained unchanged in the post-World War Two period despite the punctuation of major events such as: Cyclone Tracey in 1974, the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983, the 1989 Newcastle earthquake, 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires and 2011 Queensland floods). In the Australian emergency management context there has been an increasing identification of the importance of whole of government for managing large scale natural disasters but the area of work related to state and federal agency integration remains underdeveloped. This is borne out by the example of the deployment of the ADF and coordination with the bushfire authorities in NSW. The result of which was an apparent lack of coordination which can impact on the provision of the acute disaster response.

Whilst there is an overall consensus from those in executive government, government departments and emergency agencies that there is a strong commitment to implementing whole of government management during times of crises. It has, however, highlighted that a mere commitment to whole of government working is not sufficient for its successful implementation. It must be supported across all levels of government through leadership, coordination strategies and a culture that values integration over fragmentation. All parties involved must be aligned in order to make whole of government a reality.

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?

Improvements to how arrangements are designed and translated into practice can be defined in three key ways:

1. How do policy and legislative frameworks impact on disaster management responses?
Preparation and planning for natural disasters and crisis events remains a significant task at the

national level. The 'all hazards' approach provides for responses based on a number of potential threats whether natural disasters or other man made events. In recent years, little analysis has been undertaken to understand whether the moves towards an 'all hazards' approach has made the task of preparation and planning for eventualities easier or more difficult. Whilst acknowledging the importance of the 'all hazards' approach, limited work has been done to assess its impact on crisis management in Australia. Given the current climate around global threats and pandemics, it would be an appropriate time to review the impact of the 'all hazards' approach to better understand the influence that it has had on preparation and planning for disasters. An examination of key preparation and planning mechanisms at the federal and state level would provide an indication of how planning moves from conceptualisation to implementation.

2. What is the impact of governance on crisis management? Given the complexity of large scale disaster responses, further review of governance arrangements that exist in the recovery phase of a natural disaster requires close examination. Increasingly, it is seen that the long-term recovery and reconstruction from disasters requires the input and capacity of government, non-government and corporate sectors. To date, little work has been done on the long-term evaluation of governance arrangements and their relationship to outcomes with respect to recovery and reconstruction.

A further and more detailed analysis could be undertaken to better understand the relationships that exist between government and non-government organisations and the corporate sector. Such an approach should help to unravel the complex series of relationships and evaluate their impact on crisis recovery.

3. How can learning occur from major disaster events and be used to mitigate future crises? Royal Commissions and inquiries have increasingly become an important part of the review of natural disasters. Despite the growing number of inquiries, questions remain as to how their findings are translated into the mitigation of future events. An assessment of whether findings and recommendations from inquiries have led to long term policy or structural change which better prepares states and their citizens would be beneficial. The review of findings from recent disaster inquiries provides a means of assessing whether final recommendations and outcomes do indeed shape policy changes with regard to natural disasters or whether we see a repetition of issues that transcend from one event to another.

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

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

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