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## Your details

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## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as**

A business owner

**Submission type**

I am submitting on behalf of my organisation

**Organisation making the submission (if applicable)**

**Consent to make submission public**

I would like this submission to remain anonymous

## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story**

While being evacuated from our own house over 3 hours drive away from our business premises we found out that our business property had been hit by bushfire on new years eve 31 Dec 2019. Our tenants had been evacuated. The next day some one snuck in and to our surprise said our buildings were all still standing while neighbours next door and across the road had burnt to the ground. We were one of the lucky ones sustaining some damage. It was still traumatising even though we weren't there and we had to deal with being evacuated from our home 6 times in the 9 weeks from New Years eve. The days since have been up and down, stressful, business is busy and so many forms, grants, processes and additional work to go through to replace fences, tools and other business items.

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## Terms of Reference (optional)

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The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#).

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### 1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Climate change  
continued destruction of forests around the world  
coal fired power plants and their pollution  
Loss of biodiversity favouring species that respond to fire

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### 1.3 Response to bushfires

Eurobodalla not well organised compared to Bega Valley  
Lack of communication on Eurobodalla councils website and social media to keep all updated including those who evacuated out of the area  
Lack of coordination in recovery.  
A volunteer in Eurobodalla knows more about who lost what locally and is providing extensive help and volunteers to help people cleanup.  
Council does not cross reference with anyone not even Lange O'rourke to make sure everyone is registered for cleanup.  
Staff recruitment needed to commence by council the next day the fires hit to get staff on the ground ASAP to assist in organisation of the recovery. (They have dedicated HR staff)  
Slow response from State and Federal government in providing assistance especially the military. They should be trained in bushfires and be deployed in peace keeping missions like fighting fires, keeping Australians safe instead of war games and wars in other far off lands. Use our tax payer funds more wisely to help Australia first.

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### 1.4 Any other matters

Loss of power for a month  
Loss of mobile communications for months made running a small business impossible. Not one phone call for all of January.  
Couldn't communicate with staff  
Unable to travel to work due to road closures.  
Not able to work at some clients premises as power was lost for over a month, no access for power tools. Our power tools were burnt in Shipping container. Not able to source generators.  
Tenants living in rental premises. Had no power for a month but were able to hook up a generator for some of that time. They were however still unable to have a shower at home for a month.  
Extended road closures especially to Victoria and to Canberra along Kings Hwy made getting supplies for business difficult and expensive. As well as the lack of truck drivers for local deliveries as a lot were out fighting the bushfires when they were north of Batemans Bay.  
After the fires when the roads were closed, trees were down and dangerous trees needing to be felled. It was a case of who you know, as despite having a local business and qualified staff in tree work, it was only some excavator and tree businesses who got work clearing roads etc despite other local businesses being qualified and available.  
Criteria to be classed a primary producer is too hard that 50% of your income must come from primary production. So if you are diversified and are smart with your money or have received an inheritance that might be rental properties it is unlikely that primary production would make more income than other ventures this is despite you spending the majority of your time working in primary production. Smart farmers who invest in multiple assets not just a farm are therefore penalised for looking after their future. Rental income and Financial investments should be excluded from the income test as they are passive income and they are obviously not your job.

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Extensive clearing of trees before and after the fires that is occurring all without permits which is disgusting, hasn't the environment endured enough.

Alot of the major fires were started by lightening strikes. New technology needs to be used to identify these fires early as they are usually in difficult to reach locations. Also fires need to be water bombed earlier before the weather conditions and smoke visibility impares them from flying as was the case most days in the south of Bega Valley.

Need for a dedicated case worker in each area so that information can be disseminated easily through a single point of contact and people don't need to continuously retell their story of losing their house. Areas which never had power or phone reception are forgotten about, difficult to disseminate information and contact residents.

Issues with planning permissions where land was purchased with building entitlement but now many properties do not have planning permission due to recent changes to Bega Valley Shire Councils building. So many properties are unable to rebuild. Too restrictive that only properties over 120ha can have a dwelling/ building entitlement. A lot of rural properties where carved up into smaller titles decades ago and now have no building entitlements despite younger generations not able to afford properties of 120ha or more and farms becoming smaller sizes and their profitability improving on these smaller enterprises.

People having choice to live in bush environments, not forced by stringent rules and extra expense. Bushfires are a fact of life in the bush and if you choose not to be insured or protect your house with sprinklers or other fire mitigation strategies then it is your decision and the government can not be held responsible or be expected to pick up the bill. Too many people chose not to have insurance and look at what they have lost. Some still complaining and looking for handouts.

Due to changes in recent years to gun licensing, Primary producers risk losing their gun licenses due to mental health issues associated with the bushfires. If you call one of the national mental health help lines your details are recorded and it is likely your gun will be removed from your possession. It is law that anyone suffering from a mental health episode and hold a gun license they must advise police. It is then extremely difficult to get your gun and license back requiring costly legal intervention. The opinion of the police assessors is that you will not ever fully recover from any mental illness therefore you are a risk to society and yourself so can not have a gun anymore, This is despite these assessors not being medical professionals themselves nor trained in this area. It is proven in Psychology that people can permanently recover from a mental health episode, if only the law enforcement understood that.

## **Supporting documents or images**

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