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## Your details

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## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as**

A primary producer

**Submission type**

I am making a personal submission

**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**

I am an urban and regional planner, living and working in regional NSW. I am a primary producer and experienced recently the Sir Ivan Dougherty Fire nearby. I am concerned that climate change is causing enhanced bushfire impacts and also that the government is lax on responding to climate change through policy especially planning laws.

## Terms of Reference (optional)

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

**1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

Causes of the bushfires are undoubtedly due to climate change impacts - the drought and temperature increases have put our

native landscapes under enormous stress. The other issue is the fact that people are able to live in bushland settings with largely code assessable approvals, with no way of assuring individuals have knowledge or ability to be prepared in the event of a disaster.

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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

As above: the RFS has developed a complex range of considerations for bushfire planning (ie for settlement in bushfire prone landscapes) and will not say 'no' - by relying on things like APZs around homes. The messaging from the government is that it is OK to live in bush in a semi-rural setting if the bushfire codes are applied. It is not OK for people to live in the bush such as the places that were burnt this season. Farmers do not and have not allowed themselves and their infrastructure to be at risk - they locate homes well away from bushland and maintain bushfire preparedness. People in rural residential development should not be permitted to live near or in bush - and a council's strategic planning needs to ensure this is the case. The risks to residents, emergency services and biophysical environment (which has to be 'maintained' through clearing etc) are too great to risk bushfire disasters.

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### **1.3 Response to bushfires**

The response is one of humanitarian aid right now which is appropriate given the losses experienced. However the public is not asking the questions as to why people were exposed to bushfire disasters and the government actually released their updated Planning for Bushfire Policy in December 2019 - permitting development including that for vulnerable people (retirement homes, schools etc) through code assessable approval. There are unknown and untested suggestions that RFS will 'refuse' certain development at strategic planning stage but this is unlikely given the record to date. The PBP relies on subjective considerations such as what the neighbours will do in the event of fire, the adequacy of roads and water pressures etc but these are meaningless in a catastrophic event. The PBP effectively transfers responsibility to the landowner to self prepare but this cannot be relied upon and should not be a feasible outcome. What is required is clear advice and refusal to allow building on bushfire prone land and a concerted effort to resolve legacy planning issues. The PBP does not mention climate change.

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### **1.4 Any other matters**

Reference to the Victorian Royal Commission into bushfires is recommended, particularly where the RC suggested in relation to planning that land use planning be upgraded to prevent people living in bushfire prone areas and that a buy back of at risk homes/land be undertaken - which did occur but voluntarily. Over 11 years later, the Vic govt has relaxed planning laws to now permit building back in the same place - something that should never be allowed.

Saving people's lives is the priority for both residents and emergency services and the NSW government needs to create a clean slate of reviewing planning laws to restrict exposure to bush fire prone land. In most cases the rural residential development being sought after in bush settings is an extremely wasteful form of development that the wider community subsidises in terms of services etc and now is even more costly due to bushfire risk. It is a lifestyle that we cannot afford particularly with climate change impacts and potential for disasters.

## **Supporting documents or images**

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