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I am making this submission as	Resident
Submission type	Personal

Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	

Consent to make submission public	Public
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Your story	<p>To Mr. Dave Owens and Professor Mary O'Kane,</p> <p>I'm a farmer and small business owner living on the Far South Coast of NSW, near the town of Cobargo.</p> <p>I am lucky to still have my house and life after the fire that came through our property during the early hours of the 31st December 2019.</p> <p>I was not alone at home that night, but had to wake up my partner and my mum from sleep to tell them that the Badja fire was now approaching.</p> <p>As we had planned, we prepared ourselves to stay and fight. The water systems had all been prepped the day before and we put on our fire gear and got ready. We moved our sheep in to the house paddock. We waited, but not for long.</p>
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Soon we had fires starting on our property and our neighbours place. We watched the fires get bigger and start burning through our paddocks and forest. We saw the lights of a firetruck next door, but it turned and drove off. We hadn't expected any help, but this was still hard to watch.

As the flames got bigger and started moving faster, coming on us from two sides, I wondered if we had done enough to get ready. I wondered how dangerous the situation was and if we were able to defend our place. It was too late to leave and I wondered if we were going to die. My mum standing next to me with a fire hose.

But the thing was, we had prepared. We knew this was a likely scenario and we'd spent the last few years putting in the time and money to create a safe place for ourselves. As horrific an experience as it was, we weren't caught off guard.

We fought fire back from our house and buildings for about 5 hours, as it moved around the wet zone we could manage, and the winds changed. It came back at us over four waves, and in the end everything that we couldn't wet down was burned. That's across a 90 acre property.

Our sheep did a similar dance with the fire and kept their heads and remarkably came out unscathed.

This night was the worst of my life, up to that point. What I didn't realise was that the coming months was going to be a long, drawn out test. Without water or power for three weeks while the fires burned around us. We were able to feel these fires, rumbling in our guts, as they turned into the kind of firestorm that we had fought on NYE.

The farm was a mess, the sheep had nothing, we could barely sleep, and the ordeal wasn't over. It took weeks before we could breath clean air, a month before we felt safe to all leave the farm, and two months before I could get back to my work. It had a devastating effect in so many ways.

And yet our community was coming together and supporting each other however they could. I saw such generosity and willingness to take things on over that period. It was truly amazing.

My submission to the inquiry is simple and in two parts.

Firstly, but less importantly, we know that we can prepare as a wider community for these kind of fire events.

If our leaders take this threat to lives seriously, we can do so much more. People of all kinds have been using and managing fire for a long time, so we don't have to start from scratch. We need to question everything, listen to the experts, and put our resources towards a very real national threat.

We need to learn how to tackle the fire threat in hard to reach terrain, where the worst fires get going. To look at the land use mosaic and design it for resilience. And we need to accelerate the technologies that will give us the upper hand like AI modelling and drones.

You'll notice that I don't talk discuss about the RFS or firetrucks. As far as I could see, these brave souls did absolutely everything that could over that time, and they just didn't have the support that they needed.

Preparing for a threat in Australia that is as regular as clockwork?

It just makes sense.

Secondly, and much more importantly, we need to address the underlying climatic trends.

Is global warming the cause of this fire? That's a tricky thing to pin down. Is climate change real? Well, that's abundantly clear.

Are we facing a future where these kinds of conditions will become more likely and severe? I don't have any doubt that the answer is yes.

So, let's take our role in this seriously. As a world leader, Australia can do a lot to mitigate the harshest effects of a changing climate. It's a daunting task yes, but by doing nothing, or the bare minimum, we'd be actively pursuing the worst case scenario.

Globally, we need to address climate change and Australia can't shirk its significant role to play. As a wealthy nation. As a mining nation. As a big emitter. And, as a scientific leader.

Sadly, I don't think that I've fought the fire of my life. I believe that I've fought the first fire of my life. But it's not my own life that really concerns me, as cliché as that may sound.

There are people being born into this world right now, and will continue to be.

And it's them that I worry about.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Ben Buggy

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1.2 Preparation and planning

1.3 Response to bushfires

1.4 Any other matters

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