



Submission details

I am making this submission as	A resident in a bushfire-affected area
Submission type	I am submitting on behalf of my organisation
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	Community Industry Group
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	Community Industry Group
Consent to make submission public	I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story	The Community Industry Group is a peak organisation supporting the community services sector in NSW. We work with the community services sector to support the most vulnerable members of our communities.
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Terms of Reference (optional)

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

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Across the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley, the community already faces significant disadvantage on a number of fronts, including: mental health, lack of employment and financial stress, lack of affordable and appropriate housing, DV, drug and alcohol addiction, larger than average ageing populations and people with disabilities, vulnerable Aboriginal communities. All of these issues have been significantly exacerbated by the bushfires and now COVID-19. There is significant trauma within the community as a result of the bushfires, amplified by COVID-19 and the threat of future fires.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Whilst heroic individual efforts from community members, those working in the community sector, emergency services and local Council, it is clear that particularly in the Eurobodalla disaster planning and coordination was seriously inadequate. The impacts of Climate Change on natural cycles of drought has grown substantially, and Eurobodalla Shire Council in particular did not acknowledge and plan for the type of natural disaster we have just experienced. We need much better disaster management planning and resilience building across local government, the general community, community and emergency services. For an example of this, please see:
<https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/community-emergency-resilience-plan-2017-2021>

1.3 Response to bushfires

As mentioned, individuals and organisations did their best and were oftentimes truly heroic in their efforts to protect vulnerable people and property. The scale of the fires however clearly demonstrated that resources were grossly insufficient, and many vulnerable people such as elderly people sheltering in residential aged care facilities or in their own homes were only saved by a change in wind direction or the generosity of neighbours. Emergency planning that had factored in the support of emergency services was therefore completely untenable. Loss of communications and power were disastrous, and must be protected at all costs in future. The RFS must be resourced to a much greater degree, and communities need disaster management training. Vulnerable people need adequate alternatives to mass evacuation centres which struggle to cope with more able members of the community.

1.4 Any other matters

The Community Industry Group has gathered responses from the community services sector across SE NSW and collated a report: Southeastern NSW Bushfire Crisis. A film: Aged Care in A Bushfire was also created in conjunction with the Seniors Rights Service to ask aged care providers across the region: What worked? What didn't work? What could be improved? These resources can be found here:
<https://communityindustrygroup.org.au/resources/bushfire-recovery-resources/>

Supporting documents or images
