

## Your details

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**Title**

Ms

**First name**

Alice

**Last name**

Ansara

## Submission details

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**I am making this submission as**

A resident in a bushfire-affected area

**Submission type**

I am making a personal submission

**Consent to make submission public**

I give my consent for this submission to be made public

## Share your experience or tell your story

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**Your story**

This summer I was without hope. For our survival, for our future, for my children's security and for the billions of animals that lost their lives in these fires.

I live in Moruya with my partner and 2 children. In early December we had just bought our beautiful home on the western edge of town when smoke began to fill our every room and moment. Some days we wouldn't leave the house. I began to see the mobilisation at the Moruya RFS centre down the road - volunteers going off on strike teams, their partners weeping as they dropped them off. And I felt that insidious type of terror that begins in your stomach before you can fully understand it in your mind. By Dec. 30th I was feeling hopeless and when the horror of those fires came - with 22 evacuees crowded into our home - I was feeling scared and furious. On Jan 3rd, with the threat of fires south, north and west of us merging on our town, we evacuated north to my mothers - 2 families, 2 dogs (mine died on the journey) and our evacuation bags and photo albums hastily thrown in. The trip to Wollongong that normally takes 3 hours took 15. I felt terrible leaving our community, leaving our house, leaving

family behind - but realised when faced with an existential threat to me and my children - I would do anything to survive. We drove back ways past the already burnt Rosedale, past incinerated towns, past forests burnt into oblivion and worst of all the sickening realisation that most every single animal that lived in those places would have died in infernos of that size and intensity. When we finally arrived in Wollongong I vomited with the sadness of it and had a headache the like of which I've never experienced. Sure, stress and smoke inhalation but also the pure pain of realising the future that we have in front of us. The desire to deny it and the lived experience of not being able to. There is no doubt amongst scientists, former fire and emergency chiefs and many of us - that human induced climate change is the main underlying causality of these 'unprecedented' fires. If we do not address this - if we do not attempt to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees, we are doomed. If this past summer is 1 degree of global warming looks like - then I don't know if I want me or my children to live to see what 2 degrees is. I could go on about the evacuations we experienced, the trauma we experienced, the collective grief of our communities, the rage we had to contend with - but for me, it all comes back to - address the root cause and you will give me hope. If we do not - I will despair.

## 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

Human induced climate change.

I'm sure you will be receiving submissions from the likes of Greg Mullins and Tim Flannery - so I won't footnote this cause or attempt to justify it. We are beyond arguing about its existence or relevance. We just need to address it and act on it.

### 1.2 Preparation and planning

The Eurobodalla Shire Council did not have a bushfire or disaster management plan that was in any way useful or appropriate for the scale of disaster that this was. The declaration of climate emergency which the Council voted down in the months before the bushfire might have gone some way towards addressing this.

It is my understanding that National Parks and Wildlife had \$121 million cut from their budget since 2011. We NEEDED those National Parks staff, we needed senior rangers with the right skills and experience, we needed their knowledge of hazard reduction burns and pest control, we needed their knowledge of forested areas.

Again, if I understand correctly - In our last State Budget, Fire and Rescue had its capital expenditure budget cut by \$28.5 million or 35 per cent. And the RFS had its capital expenditure budget slashed by \$49.9 million or 75 per cent. I mean.. what more can I possibly add to those numbers - it speaks for itself.

Another budget cut victim was the ABC especially our regional stations. ABC South East was my family's life raft during these fires. At one point on NYE, with 22 evacuees in our home, we had lost electricity, we had lost telecommunications and yet we had a small transistor radio and AA batteries - and with local ABC on we felt safe in at least we would know if ember attack was about to rain down on us, if we were being told to evacuate or not and to where, if we were in imminent danger or if we needed to stay at home because roads were on fire. And then we lost the ABC - later finding out that it was because the transmitter at Mt Wandera got incinerated - but when that happened, I for one thought we were dead. THAT's how real it is that the ABC and their rolling emergency coverage is our means of survival. The funding to the ABC should reflect that existential significance.

The logging of our native forests on the south coast has contributed to the devastating fire season that we had. A moratorium on logging native forests especially in bushfire affected areas would assist in the recovery of huge losses to wildlife in our area, would maintain much needed carbon storage in trees and in the long term help prevent the types of insane bushfires we had this last season.

### **1.3 Response to bushfires**

While a huge amount of money and good will poured into the recovery effort - I would like to keep raising the issue of a billion animals burnt in these fires - 240 billion is actually a more realistic estimate - and that we need lots of resources and long term commitment to assisting in the restoration or help to wildlife habitat.

### **1.4 Any other matters**

The idea that Greg Mullins and Co. had with the Bushfire Summit that was meant to be held this year was much anticipated by me. I would like to see that go ahead and to have the conversation/findings made accessible to all in our communities.

I'm interested in the role of indigenous or 'cultural' burns. I'm interested in understanding all that could contribute to ameliorating the impact of these fires. I understand that in our terrible near future we will need better and more preparation however I maintain that we MUST address the root cause - climate change.

### **Supporting documents or images**

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