



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Eric

Last name

Thomas

Submission details

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

Your story

My story starts back in 1992 when I started new extensions to my house on my farm at Kiah, NSW 2551, realizing an urgent need for fire protection in view of what I was witnessing growing around me at an alarming rate.

I had come to this conclusion mainly due to the fact that I was spending so much time in my role as president of the Australian Conservation Hunters Association, in the bush monitoring hair funnels, sand traps, gossamer nets and trail cameras in a constant search to locate new unknown colonies of native species and/or monitoring the spread of introduced species. Over these 30-odd years I was witnessing the growth of understory and the build-up of combustible forest debris at an alarming rate and seeing firsthand the damage it was causing our wildlife.

Our country has had its flora and fauna evolve through and because of a constant regime of cycling burning for over 65,000

years brought about by our indigenous ancestors in their vigil to create grassland and open forests to provide for their economy. This practice ceased from when the early colonists started farming and has by and large been suppressed since then. In 1992, I recognised that due to the ignorance that was prevailing at that time regarding preventative cyclic burning that uncontrolled wildfire would be imminent and it was only ever going to be a case of WHEN not IF. On that note I built a comprehensive firefighting system to save my house for when the fire arrived.

So incensed was I by the ignorance and arrogance of our country's collective leadership that I ran for the seat in the Bega electorate in March of 2019 for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party where my leading policy was fire prevention and the remedial methods that needed to be introduced post haste if we were to survive the inevitable holocaust.

In my policies I identified what needed to be done, as in cultural burning and strategic thinning of our forests, national parks and wildlife reserves. This not only provided safety for the constituents of the electorate but would return the bush back to its original state of open, dry and wet sclerophyll forests returning habitat for our highly threatened native species whilst utilizing the bounty that prevention would have afforded us with harvested timber and the creation of hundreds of jobs in doing so.

9 months after the elections finished, I heartbrokenly watched our country explode into the inevitable worst uncontrollable wildfire that could have been prevented. Not only did these devastating fires destroy human life and property but killed millions if not billions of native species, both flora and fauna.

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

As I stated above, the contributing factors are Number 1, that our forests, nature reserves and national parks have denigrated because of “locked up” tracks and fire trails being allowed to overgrow with not only understory but by the sheer numbers of trees per square hectare that prevails in what was historically, “open dry sclerophyll forests”.
Number 2, the lack of cyclic or cool-climate controlled burns that not only remove the majority, of combustible forest debris like small limbs, sticks and bark, but nurture the very ground with carbon and nutrients created by this holistic method that feeds not only the fungi that many of our really threatened species of flora and fauna required for their very existence but germinates the seeds for new forests.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Observation of our surrounds was all I needed to spur me on and prepare for the inevitable.
I built a comprehensive firefighting system that has a 40,000 gallon (151,417 litre) capacity that encapsulated my house in spray and mist that ran for many hours before the fire front hit with enough water to get me through the height of the fires. This was started some hours before vacating to an evacuation point. Consequentially, my diligence in this matter, saved my house in an area that was devastated by fire with the loss of over 40 houses nearby.
Sadly, I did not have the capacity or money to do the same with our other house on the farm, nor nine of my farm sheds, inclusive of heavy machinery, which all perished in the fire.

1.3 Response to bushfires

My personal response to the inevitability of further fires will be to clear and burn and making sure there is little or no combustible litter on the forest floors on my farm and return it to pre-colonization open dry sclerophyll forest.
My advice to councils and the government is to follow suit and return the bush post haste to open dry and wet sclerophyll and to open up fire-trails and tracks throughout our nature flora and fauna reserves, national parks and state forests.
Councils and the Department of Main Roads need to look at comprehensively clearing roads, streets, by-ways and highways to offer safe passage.
There would be little need for public warnings if this above panacea were implemented as law and part and parcel of future development in bushfire prevention.
The jobs that would be created to facilitate the above in areas like ours that need employment would be quite substantial.
I feel the council and the government have been remiss in their duties in protecting their constituents and need to go back to the drawing board and look back into our history to see the way clearly forward. This needs to be communicated throughout our communities as well as indelibly in law.
Without the NSW Forestry and local contractor dozers and operators reopening tracks and cutting firebreaks many more would have perished.
The authorities need to consult with local knowledge and update their techniques to include concentrated and deliberate backburning firebreaks.
We need dedicated bushfire fighting crews in all towns that could direct and facilitate preventative measures throughout the year for the impending bushfire seasons.

Supporting documents or images
