



Title	The Hon
First name	Gary
Last name	Nairn AO

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>I live in Queanbeyan but own property at Old Adaminaby and Carlaminda, both areas impacted by separate fires. My wife owns a property at Surf Beach which sadly was destroyed in the New Year's Eve fire. I am also the Chairman of the Mulloon Institute which is based on our farms, Mulloon Creek Natural Farms, between Bungendore and Braidwood, an area also impacted by the fires. I also chaired the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2003 Australian Bushfires. Probably the strongest recommendations contained in the subsequent report, A Nation Charred, were in relation to local knowledge. Local knowledge with respect to conducting fuel reduction burns and local knowledge during bushfire events. In the Foreword to that report I said "that proper land management, proper fire prevention principles and proper fire suppression strategies could have greatly limited the risk of these high intensity wildfires." A consistent message to that Inquiry was "local knowledge and experience is being ignored by an increasingly top heavy</p>
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bureaucracy." I went on to say the "conclusions and recommendations are based on the evidence and deliberations from a very exhaustive process and reflect very much the views of those people with the generations of experience and knowledge of managing our land. The report is one that should be owned by those people." In speaking to many of those same people following the 2020 bushfires it appears to me that the evidence and recommendations from 2003 have not been heeded. Crucially and unfortunately it would not appear that the extensive local knowledge that exists in the fire affected regions have not been given the priority my 2003 report called for. Some more specific details are presented in the balance of this submission below. In addition to my experiences in 2003 and during the recent fire events, I also want to support a submission made separately by The Mulloon Institute that I chair. Our work over many years has shown the scientific evidence of landscape repair and rehydration to creating resilience of those rehydrated landscapes to drought, flood and bushfires. Widespread repair and rehydration of our degraded catchments would be a major deterrent to high intensity wildfires.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

I refer to the 2003 report and its recommendations that cover "Land management factors contributing to the severity of recent bushfire damage" and "fuel reduction and fire management". With respect to my earlier comments on the importance of local knowledge, I particularly refer to Recommendation 11, that recommended "the Council of Australian Governments implements arrangements in which greater flexibility is devolved to local brigade captains in the issuing of permits to burn for fuel reduction and other purposes in the context of local fire management plans." From my Mulloon Institute experience, hydrated landscapes have the effect of reducing, and in some cases stopping, fire spread. Yes we experienced severe drought over the previous couple of years in the fire affected regions, but we are aware of locations where there remained intact hydrated valley systems that dramatically reduced the impact of the fire in those locations. Land management practices such as regenerative agriculture that help maintain hydration make landscapes far more resilient to fire. These practices need to be encouraged into the future but broad scale repair and rehydration will act as a major buffer.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Many other recommendations in my 2003 report refer to preparation and planning, including with respect to planning schemes and development. But as detailed above the best preparation is a landscape that can more naturally deter fire.

1.3 Response to bushfires

Recommendations covering "Management and coordination of fire suppression" and "Fire fighting resources and technology" in my 2003 report include many relevant matters albeit technology having developed considerably since 2003. These recommendations once again highlight the importance of local knowledge and local control, however it would appear in the 2019/2020 fires "orders from on high" still seemed to be the norm. Many local volunteers, not part of the RFS, made their own decisions in many cases as they had a very different view to the "powers to be".

1.4 Any other matters

We need to learn from past experiences. While the 2003 fires were not as extensive as the 2019/2020 fires, in many locations they were just as intense. CSIRO Scientist, Phil Cheney, gave evidence in 2003 that "west of the ACT the forests will conservatively take more than 200 years to return to anything like their original condition...." I visited Kosciuszko National Park after the 2003 fires as part of my Inquiry's activities and saw just how intense that fire burnt. I revisited part of that area at the end of February this year, to unfortunately experience similar

devastation. By just like 2003, I also witnessed an area within KNP that wasn't nearly as badly affected, the Snowy Plains area. This is private land that on the whole is well managed and therefore slowed the fire. In particular it was instructive to observe land where a research project, High Fire, conducted following the 2003 fires, is located. While the funding for this project stopped some years ago the different land management practices are very evident. Fire affected areas in this region also had recovered substantially faster than the adjoining KNP. I would recommend the reestablishment of that important research project.

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