

Bush Fire Submission

DETAIL???

7.4.2020

My submission really repeats the contents of my letters to the Prime Minister, to which I had no reply, except for a standard letter telling me all the things the Federal Government was doing, all of which everyone knew about – things that should have started in planning some 10 years ago. My letters address Strategies and Compensation and are attached.

These letters were making the point that the Bush Fires were national and therefore the responsibility lay with the Federal Government to have planned a long time ago, working with States and a wide range of experts, following advice and warnings from experts over the 10 year period.

I am enormously pleased that the NSW Government has taken the initiative to develop a long term strategy, something you will note in my letters to the PM – NOT a Royal Commission, but a Strategy.

I don't have anything else to add – I am not an expert in the area of Bush Fires, but my past experience was management consulting and training – working with for-profit and not-for-profit organisations –hence the interest in the importance of developing long term strategies.

I am a member of the RFS Scotland Island - Community Fire Unit (CFU), which I find very rewarding.

The letters may be useful for reference –an example of feedback from the community.

With best wishes for a successful outcome.

I shall look forward to seeing it

Gregory Roberts OAM

Attachments follow

Gregory Blaxland Roberts OAM - 

Scott Morrison

Prime Minister of Australia

13.11.2019

Good afternoon Prime Minister

Actually, it is not a good afternoon. I am sitting at my computer, waiting for directions as a member of the Scotland Island RFS (CFU), reading the attached article. The fire situation is potentially terrifying!

The article is 'spot-on'! – I agree with all of it

I have particularly noted your twitters which are thoughtful, but not physically helpful.

However I understand your Government is contributing resources, which is very good. The volunteers and professional fire fighters are literally risking their lives – so your support is very important – they deserve it.

You and the Premier have both been loud and genuine in your praise and that is wonderful. But you have both, as the article states:-

'have also sought to prevent discussion of climate change when significant parts of the country are under the threat of bushfires, a threat that scientific bodies have [repeatedly warned](#) will be [amplified by the impacts of climate change](#).'

You were very careful, apparently, not to use the words 'Climate Change'. You refuse to talk about it.

Both being intelligent people, you know perfectly well that the two are linked.

You then both hop into your car/plane and disappear back to your respective cities.

To say that you don't want to talk about it while the fires are happening is a very weak, unacceptable and totally transparent excuse.

If you were serious about it, you would have said something like "we are presently (or will be) working on just this with the NSW Government and will have a draft strategy out on the long term action to handle bush fires with minimal impact on the country and the people before Christmas for comment".

But you didn't.

QUESTION

My question is:-

When **are** you going to talk about it?

And when are you going to develop a serious and carefully thought through long term strategy and a series of actions, with all the KPIs, feedback etc to address the problems of drought, fire and the awful impacts on the communities? – no knee-jerk reactions please.

I very much look forward to hearing from you

Gregory Roberts OAM

PS

I am copying our local MP Jason Falinski, with whom we have met, and do correspond

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Please note – I am not reattaching the article sent last as it will be on your file

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Gregory Blaxland Roberts OAM - 

Follow up letter to 14.1.2020

Scott Morrison

Prime Minister Australia

18.11 19

Good day Prime Minister

Following up on my letter (below), I was very distressed to learn over the radio that one volunteer Fire Fighter had to use her sick leave entitlement to be granted the time by her employer to go and fight the fires.

Another, same radio report, said that he was obliged to use his annual leave to do likewise.

Prime Minister, this is very serious. It is quite probable that these employers are also in very difficult financial circumstances and don't have the financial flexibility to be able to fund the volunteers, which they would normally have done in the past.

But these are not normal times, and I guess that this problem is probably occurring with many other volunteers – you probably have guessed it as well.

So, here's something you and your government can do straight away - something practical that will be much more appreciated than, I suggest, giving them a pat on the back and well wishes. Pay them, all of them, the amount they are losing, or even could be losing, from their employers (we must think of the financial impact on these employers as well). Also, pay them an out-of-pocket allowance – generous please.

Many of them will be travelling some distance each day to reach and return from the firefront (1 case reported was 40 k a day – 80 k there and back – every day.) – an allowance that would be just the same as you pay to your colleagues and staff when they go away from their normal location.

Pay them now – there is absolutely no reason why you wouldn't do this.

And they will be very appreciative of it.

I have also written to the NSW Premier on this subject

Please tell me when you have done this decent and appropriate thing.

Actually this action will probably bring more people into this critically important volunteer service in the short and long term, especially as the numbers are dwindling (much lower than those stated by the NSW Minister Elliot of 75,000, I think it was).

And no doubt it will be part of your long term strategy to address this critically important and no doubt continuing issue.

I look forward to hearing back from you on the action you have taken.

Greg Roberts OAM, member Community Fire Unit (CFU) Scotland Island RFS

cc Jason Falinski

Gregory Blaxland Roberts OAM - [REDACTED]

Scott Morrison



Prime Minister of Australia



Australian Government



PO Box 6500



Canberra, ACT, 2600

14.1.20

Good Morning Prime Minister

Regarding these terrible fires

A Happy New year to you, although it hasn't started off very well for any of us

First, to note that I haven't received responses to my last 2 letters – however this letter more than covers them.

Strategies

Regarding developing long term Strategies to address the best way/s to set plans and to conduct successful fire management programs, no doubt to be applied to the next fire season, and into the future, I see no evidence of one starting.

It is an urgent requirement – there are only 6 months before the next (August 2020) fire season is upon us.

Your idea, Prime Minister of a Royal Commission is fine, if we had the time – which we do not have. Based on current Royal Commissions, they take more than a year,

and then action plans have to be shaped up to put the recommendations into action.

By then we could have a lot more of Australia burning!

Far better to urgently get going to develop one or more Strategies necessary plus the Action Plans involved - **well before August of this year!**

My suggestion – appoint a National Fire Commissioner with great knowledge in the area, and very good communication and leadership skills, with the power to bring key people together with appropriate skills to work through the issues - from Federal and State Governments, the State Fire Commissioners, the RFS , Fire and Rescue, Army, Navy and Air Force, indigenous community, representatives from the fire affected areas, experts from the Universities and relevant research institutions, past fire commissioners with vast experience, and anyone else with relevant knowledge and skills who can make a positive input.

Apart from signing off on the recommendations, stand back and leave it to these people who have all the knowledge and skills necessary.

Give this body a tight but adequate timeline, bearing in mind that August is the start of the next fire season .

You know that a large majority of the Australian community, no doubt comprising a complete range of political persuasions, wants not only immediate action, which your Government is now providing, but also a long term Strategy to manage fire, protect people and their houses and contents in a much more successful way. To remove the 'knee-jerk' technique of management.

Compensation

I note that you have responded to not only my, but many others, request for an urgent and speedy compensation plan.

That is good. Whether it is adequate, we shall find out soon enough.

The other aspect of compensation is a wider and much bigger one, and I'm aware that you have made some commitments on this.

What I haven't seen is your commitment to compensating people who have lost their homes, possessions, their livelihoods (retailers, small businesses etc) , and particularly those fire fighters who have lost their lives working desperately to protect our country.

I don't have to remind you that your Government has a Duty of Care to all the people who make up Australia.

There is clear evidence that ever since (about 10 years ago) the CSIRO advised your Government of an emerging problem that would develop around this time because of the warming climate, and subsequently the drought, the approach by the fire commissioners (including past Fire Commissioner Greg Mullins), back in April (where you rejected their request and refused to see them), and as late as directly after the May election when you and your Government were warned :-

- Josh Taylor - Guardian Newspaper (Tue 24 Dec 2019)

The government was warned by the Department of Home Affairs after the May election that Australia faced more frequent and severe heatwaves and bushfires, and that livelihoods would be affected without effective action on climate change.

The department's incoming government brief to the home affairs minister, [Peter Dutton](#), warned of "disasters" exacerbated by climate change.

"The physical effects of climate change, population growth, and urbanisation mean that without effective action more Australians' livelihoods will be impacted by disasters into the future and the cost of those disasters will continue to grow," the brief stated.

...You took no action!

Further, NSW (and other States?) were waiting for 2 years for a funding boost, after you rejected a business case to expand the National fleet of large air tankers, but again it fell on deaf ears.

You clearly signalled that you weren't interested and didn't see it as important!

Now you are offering on-going funding for the National Aerial Fire Fighting Fleet, it having fallen to 23% of necessary capability, as I understand it – the CL415 and the Beria 200 with water scooping capability should have been brought in to urgent use so as to be ready for a catastrophe, like we are now experiencing.

Now you are suddenly dumping in money – probably nowhere near adequate, as will be demonstrated soon no doubt – as well as the Army, the Navy (too late) – and doing a big advertising program to try to establish some semblance of a responsible image.

An absolute failure in your Duty of Care to the Australian people!

Now you and your Government are responsible in large part for this failure, and you need to shape up to a very big compensation and support plan.

You might well argue that the Government shouldn't be entirely responsible – but you can't argue that it is not largely responsible, as detailed above .

You and your Government's chief goal now is to get the Economy, the Environment and the Social situation back into good basic shape to enable the whole country – yes, and the cities including Canberra to move forward.

That is your challenge Prime Minister, and your opportunity to gain acceptance by, and the support of, the people.

First the Fire Fighters who have been killed , desperately trying to save our country – what compensation package have you arranged for their young families? – they should never be allowed to suffer financially throughout their lives. It is not enough to simply turn up for the funerals.

And all the other people affected – retailers, small businesses, home owners who have suffered damage and complete home destruction, and others similarly affected – what will be their compensation package?

And while you're working it out, be generous – you well know that every single dollar will go back into the economy very quickly. And it will be a good boost to the economy, reflected in the GNP!

Conclusion

I'm sorry Prime Minister, but your decision to do nothing to prepare the country to meet this very serious problem, that was promised, is absolutely unforgiveable.

Your attempts to hide, to have your Dept. lie, then rattle off a number of 'off-the-cuff' decisions to give people the impression that you were suddenly in control and on top of the situation – failed.

You probably realise that you are not a leader, or a long term thinker and planner on behalf of the Australian people, very much evidenced in your photo-op visits to the field .

So, get the Strategy group going, get their recommendations and fund them – generously.

You may not, along with your Climate Denier Ministers, believe that the earth is warming and dreadful things will happen as a result.

But, please just acknowledge that the fires are devastating to the Economy (tourism, business, health – mental and physical), the Environment (the possible extinction and near extinction of our extraordinary native wildlife), and the people of Australia – the Social aspects.

Please tell me that will do this Prime Minister.

I look forward very much to hear back from you with a good, positive message.

Gregory Roberts OAM

Gregory Blaxland Roberts OAM - 

Good day Prime Minister

24.2.2020

I received a response to my letter 14.1.2020 on 11th February

As I, and no doubt all the people that received this standard form letter, knew all about the content, I have to say that it was a total waste of money.

I am now resending my letter in the hope that you will actually address the 2 major points that it raises, which were certainly not addressed in your 'reply'.

Please acknowledge the constructive thinking and time that I have put into my letter with a similarly constructive response.

I note that you have pressed on with a Royal Commission, which is guaranteed to delay any strategic action on your Government's part to actually do something of value **before the next fire season arrives in 5 months time**

I look forward to hearing urgently from you on these desperately important matters

With best wishes

Gregory Roberts

Cc Jason Falinski MP MacKellar 2105

Gregory Blaxland Roberts OAM - 