



## Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Jan

Last name

Timmerman

## Submission details

I am making this submission as

A member of the general public

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

I am not living in any of the bushfire ravaged areas but (together with my immediate family) was nonetheless effected, especially when performing my job of delivering flyers to letter boxes in my area in and around Wyong. The issue was the thick and lingering smoke that had drifted across to the coast from the mega fires in the Blue Mountains region. To meet the delivery deadlines in the safest possible way, especially considering my age of 70, I undertook several short delivery sessions compared to my usual schedule. Even so, breathing was still difficult. The stifling heat didn't help.

## Terms of Reference (optional)

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

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**1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

The obvious cause of those unprecedented fires during the 2019-20 bushfire season has been CLIMATE CHANGE. The contributing factors had been in evidence for a long time. First of all there was the drought, widely recognized as the longest and most intense on record. There had been a long period of little or no rain. Added to this was the prolonged period of hotter than normal temperatures, with longer than usual heatwaves around the country at that time. This resulted in extremely dry fuel loads which had often not been attended to due to low windows of opportunity.

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**1.2 Preparation and planning**

For a long time there had been prior warnings of an impending bushfire catastrophe occurring in the 2019-20 summer. These warnings came from various experts, including climate scientists and both former and current fire chiefs, but they were not taken seriously by the Federal and NSW State Governments. This was in large part due to the climate change deniers and sceptics in their ranks. There was also the absence of an early advertising campaign to get people living in bushfire prone areas to adequately prepare well beforehand. Added to this the NSW Rural Fire Service was at times not sufficiently backed up by the NSW Government, either being criticized for not doing enough hazard reduction burning, or criticized for allowing too much smoke to spread when such a vital task was undertaken.

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**1.3 Response to bushfires**

It must be acknowledged at the outset that the then NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner did an outstanding job, as did all those courageous fire fighters under his command. The problem lay with the NSW Government which, like its Liberal Federal Government counterpart, was not only slow to recognize the gravity of what could potentially unfold, but was subsequently slow with the issuing of public warnings. It was a group of former fire commissioners leading the way by issuing warnings well before the fire season even started, one such chief being a regular spokesperson. As well as this there had been inadequate resourcing such as the most effective firefighting aircraft. There was also a problem with communication systems, especially during the South Coast fires. There should always be effective communication between State and Federal Governments and Fire Commissioners. The failings of the Prime Minister in this regard, for instance, was problematic in both co-ordination and collaboration, such as the announcement of Army Reserves before first informing the NSW Fire Commissioner and Premier. All responses should be beyond politics.

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**1.4 Any other matters**

It is not to say that those catastrophic bushfires could have been avoided altogether, but their impact could have, to some extent at least, been lessened had the warning signs been acted upon earlier. Effective mitigation measures such as hazard reduction (the only measure many climate change sceptics would subscribe to) should be undertaken in a timely manner, given that the window of opportunity to do so is decreasing year by year due to the bushfire seasons becoming longer. It is also imperative that the thousands of years of indigenous practices should be adopted and passed on to both indigenous and non-indigenous people. It is also crucially important that our precious ecosystems are continuously protected from future bushfire risks, keeping in mind the enormous number of (often endangered) fauna and flora species which perished in the fires. It is of course vital that land use planning and management and building standards are reviewed, but I will leave that to the experts. Speaking of experts, it is time the climate experts were properly listened to. Already we have had dodgy deals made by the

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Federal and NSW State Government with the fossil fuel industries, the latest being with gas. It is no use developing effective measures and responses to dealing with the new normal of bushfires, if ineffective action on climate change continues to get in the way.

## **Supporting documents or images**

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