

Your details

Title

Mr

First name

John

Last name

Pickett

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

I have lived in Eden for 30 years. From New Year's Eve 2019 the air was thick with smoke from fires to the North, West and South of us. We knew that at least one of these fires would eventually hit us. As our forests have been locked up to an ever increasing degree, with little or no hazard reduction and ever increasing fuel loads we knew that when the fire front came, there would be no stopping it. That is what happened Friday 4/1/2020. Having spent 3 days packing up what we were able to take in two cars, clearing the house block next door of scrub as best we could and sand bagging our gutters and filling them with water, we left for the wharf precinct. The sky literally turned from red to black in a matter of a few minutes at 4.30 in the afternoon. My family gathered at my son's restaurant at the wharf where we stayed until 7pm. We then took refuge on the Tugboat Cooma where we spent the next 24 hrs. We honestly thought our home was being destroyed by the fire. Fortunately when the fire front got to within 1km of our house the wind dropped then changed direction. This was the only thing that saved our house

(and possibly the whole town of Eden). The fire came at terrifying speed, taking a mere 4 hours to reach us from the Victorian Border (some 45kms away). We knew we would lose our house, but the fear I felt for the safety of my family still haunts me. We remained packed and ready to move at a moments notice until we had survived a second expected wave on 17/1/2020. During that time we had smoke filled air every day, falling ash and blackened leaves and the constant fear of wind changes sending the fire back at us.

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

- Too much fuel on the forest floors.
- Lack of hazard reduction measures.
- Inaccessibility for fire fighters to forests.
- Not enough fire breaks
- Gum tree forest right to the edge of towns.
- Too many management authorities- Local Gov, Crown Land, Forestry and National Parks surround our town.

1.2 Preparation and planning

- Prevent a future recurrence by whatever means necessary.
- Utilise knowledge of local bush workers, local fire fighters and Aboriginal traditional land management.
- All towns should be surrounded by substantial fire breaks. We have millions of hectares of Gumtrees out there. We should not be forced to have them within our town limits.

1.3 Response to bushfires

- The RFS, and, to a lesser extent, Forestry and National Parks, did a fabulous job. Bega Valley Shire Council were great at keeping us updated and informed of what was happening. Our local community were very supportive of each other.

1.4 Any other matters

- I want something to come if this. Not just suggestions for change, but actual implementation of these changes. I don't want to go through this again. It was terrifying for me and my family.
- I'm distressed by the number of wildlife that were lost during these fires. Rather than being protected, they have been decimated due in part to their habitat being made inaccessible to fire fighters. To our south lies Nadgee Forest. It has been closed to vehicular access for many years, and more than a dozen bridges and crossings have been (apparently) removed, along with most roads so the fire over many days consumed all wildlife in its path as it progressed, unchecked, to the coast

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- 25056ECB-09D6-40EC-BD7F-2BAB19035E20.jpeg
- 1C8F181C-1DB6-4495-910D-DD5365BDCF87.jpeg
- EE37D784-9B3A-47F7-B066-95DCA6314090.jpeg



