



Title	Mrs
First name	Kara
Last name	Cooper
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
Your story	<p>**Please note there was no drop down selection for 'resident and local business owner'. I also have a shop in Mount Victoria.</p> <p>We were hit with the bushfire here in Mount Victoria in late 2019. After the 2013 bushfire here in Mount Victoria everyone said, 'don't worry, that was a weird one. It won't hit again.' But 6 years later it did hit again.</p> <p>Both times we evacuated. I am an asthmatic and the 2019 fires with the extremely bad air quality meant I could hardly breathe, excruciating headaches and terrible sleep. When there is a fire 5 to 10 to 15 kms away you don't rest easy. When the sky is alight at night, you can't just shut your eyes and go to sleep.</p> <p>In December 2019 I had a small hatchback. My husband who is also self employed is usually not handy to Mt Vic each time the fires have struck. The stress of getting my two kids, belongings, 2</p>

dogs, cat, guinea pigs, budgies and our chickens into this hatchback means that I actually can't take it all. So you then decide 'when do I leave?'. Some people scoff when you leave too early. Where do you actually go when you have all these animals? You can't just leave on an extreme weather day with all these animals. Going for a drive, you need to stop, pull them all out, feed and water them. In 45 degree + days it means everyone is completely stressed and you can't escape the fires, heat, chaos and exhaustion.

My business resides on the highway in Mount Victoria. I could see the huge plumes of smoke from the Gospers Mountain fire across the road from my shop. Each day it got closer and closer, fell into the valley from Mt Vic into Blackheath, and I had to close the shop and go. I shuttered up the shop as best as I could as the smoke would damage all the stock. My business crashed for those weeks, yet not 40% down (like so many fellow business people) so I couldn't receive the Business Bushfire Grant on offer. With us evacuating, my husband returned daily to our home to check how close the fire was, fill the water tanks, sprinkler system tested, generator in case the power went out. This meant that he didn't work much during that period. So being evacuated with all our animals and whatever possessions we could grab, having customers across Australia not understanding I couldn't fulfill their orders and do business, and my husband the same - you could say our stress levels were completely off the scale. Our two small children grew worried, the media had the fires playing on screens everywhere. We needed to know what was happening in Mount Victoria with fires raging to the south of us (3 fire) and to the north (1 fire) yet still calm them that they were ok.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

Climate change: The major contributing factor which our federal government does not do enough about. Sick of the denial.

Drought: before the fires hit we saw an economic downturn in the Blue Mountains. Myself and many other business owners in the Blue Mountains contacted various media organisations and were shamed that we would try to push for local support when businesses further west were suffering with the drought. They were using the 'Buy it from the Bush' campaign and many said that us in the Blue Mountains should get onboard. We didn't feel comfortable with that and instead set up 'Buy it from the Blues'.

Fuel loads: RFS needs support and funding to carry out ways to control impact of bushfire each year. Sadly, the season they can do this gets shorter and shorter. State and Federal help is needed desperately.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Please consider the burning back of areas that our indigenous people have practised for many many years. They have not been seriously listened to in their land management practices.

1.3 Response to bushfires

1. 'Fires Near Me' did not update enough for us with 4 fires raging around us. At one point we got constant updates every minute on slight variations, other times it wouldn't be updated for 24 hours. Arcgis was much better in locating hot spots.

2. <http://www.huff.org.au/>
The State and Federal government needs to implement HUFF (Heads Up For Fire) within communities. This was successfully implemented in Mt Victoria and Blackheath after 2013 fires in Mt Victoria. Creating community awareness and support is key. This programme could be available Australia-wide with support and funding.

1.4 Any other matters

<http://www.huff.org.au/>
HUFF - heads up for fire. This needs to be Australia-wide. A

great community driven programme established in Mount Victoria and Blackheath.

Upload files
