



Your details

Mr

Title

First name

Matthew

Last name

Ford

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

Like many ordinary Australians over the 6 months of September 2019 to March 2020: I was shocked, dismayed and traumatised by being enveloped in choking smoke, with the threat of a conflagration erupting around me at any moment. The unusually high temperatures Australia experienced, combined with the long drying drought left me feeling like someone trapped on the hearth of a giant fireplace, perched, waiting for the match.

How will we fare this coming summer with the added complication of a potentially unresolved corona virus pandemic?

It's difficult for me to reflect on the fact the human race has been warned by people with an understanding of organic chemistry and atmospheric physics, that ceaseless CO2 emissions due mostly to the combustion of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas, could lead to a holocaust.

It's very difficult to accept that lobby groups for a dangerous industry may have been able to hold off change for long enough to cause lasting and perhaps irreversible damage to the globe. We have squabbled over the benefit cost ratio of changing to a green economy, while the window of opportunity to keep emissions below a catastrophic level may be almost locked shut.

To live through the experience many of us refusing to accept the warnings of scientists about the predictability of climate change driven by excessive CO2 emissions, reminded me of hearing, as a child, the biblical story of Doubting Thomas. John 20:24-29, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hand and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" Now we have seen the fire, do we believe in the science? What mistakes could there have been in the due process?

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

I will concur that the main contributing factor to the catastrophic Australian bushfires is climate change. Caused mainly by vast amounts of CO2 released by human activity during what is now being touted as the Anthropocene geological epoch. Scientific American magazine estimates 42.1 billion tonnes of CO2 was released into the atmosphere in 2019 by human activity. 85% of this due to the burning of fossil fuels or almost 100,000,000 tonnes per day - reduced slightly by Covid 19 lockdowns. It's understandable these figures seem almost incomprehensible to the 'man in the street'.

Scientists have been warning us for decades - a couple of century's I believe - CO2 emissions would trap heat in the atmosphere.

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, Baroness Thatcher studied chemistry at Oxford, entered politics, and in 1970 became chief minister for education & science in the UK. In 1975 became PM.

She seemed to understand the meaning of the triple bottom line: Margaret Thatcher-Speech to the UN General Assembly (Nov 8, 1989) "It is mankind and his activities which are changing the environment of our planet in damaging and dangerous ways" & "We are seeing a vast increase in the amount of carbon dioxide reaching the atmosphere.... half the carbon emitted since the Industrial Revolution still remains in the atmosphere".

1.2 Preparation and planning

A considerable amount of rezoning could be done in Australia to mitigate the damage and danger associated with future catastrophic fire events.

My view would be to have four main zones moving outward from domestic & farming territory, to a State Forest/National Park setting as follows:

- (1) Urban & farming areas
 - (2) Cleared, multi use community zone, with controlled & cultural burns
 - (3) Lightly forested native grassland, with controlled & cultural burns
 - (4) Natural native forest subject to controlled burns.
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Farmland and rural holdings should not be directly impacted by zone (4) assessed on a case by case basis.

Zone (2) would be kept clear as a safe zone, taking into account easements: with the ability for earthmoving equipment to rapidly deploy firebreaks. It would avail considerable community recreational & training opportunities.

Zone (3) would be a transition zone to the native forests, and along with zone (2) should allow the collection of fallen firewood fuel, as a fuel reduction strategy, therefor reducing the reliance of Australian households on firewood sourced from forestry industries. It would include emergency services and other State & Federal easements.

Zone (4) is the natural heritage zone and preferably left relatively untouched apart from maintenance needed for activities and easements. Mozaic burns should be rotated to ensure safe areas and keep fuel loads in check.

The three levels of Australian government & their agencies would have clearly defined and shared responsibilities.

1.3 Response to bushfires

There have been some great suggestions. Ranging from ancient first nations cultural burning practices to satellite early warning systems, to be embraced.

The Covid 19 pandemic - if still in play- will need to be taken into consideration: attention given to how we can best limit the potential spread of the disease during evacuation scenarios.

1.4 Any other matters

Payment for emergency service personnel currently viewed as volunteers:

It should be a commonwealth responsibility to introduce a pay system for emergency services personnel, in the like of the agencies of RFS & SES.

The Army Reserve pay template may work very well. Army Reservists are paid a 24 hour tax free rate, depending on rank & matching experience & training.

This rate is deemed tax free & not subject to federal income declarations. Neither did it require superannuation payment to the member, when I was a reservist.

Personally it was troubling tasked to mop up as a trained & paid soldier, after mostly unpaid forces of the RFS had done the front line fighting. This scenario doesn't fit well with equitable principles.

Supporting documents or images

Attach files

- NSW-seed-potato-protected-area.pdf
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NSW Seed Potato Protected Areas

