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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	General public
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<b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>	
<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	Public
<b>Your story</b>	<p>There is a need for many very large water tankers to be purchased/leased and used to reduce/douse an initial bushfire started from lightning strikes. This should be an outcome of the NSW inquiry.</p> <p>I have been shocked and upset by the extent and lack of proaction to control, maybe halt, the catastrophic fires in NSW.</p> <p>I have observed horrific bushfires over many years. Prince Andrew, who visitied the Blue Mountains maybe his January 2002 visit, after one of their destructive fires said fighting the fires is like fighting a war.</p> <p>Yes it is.</p> <p>And we use volunteers with trucks against the enemy. As we did over 100 years ago in WWI.</p> <p>Modern wafare uses modern planes, usually as the first attack.</p>

In Australia, due to lack of funding by State and Federal governments we choose the cheap way to defend Australians . And our country - volunteers often with old trucks.

In NSW, January 31, 2020. From Wikipedia 2019/2020 Australian Bushfires, (Hope fairly accurate):

"Fatalities 25. Injured? Those effected by bushfire smoke?  
Homes lost 2,439  
Area (estimated) ha 5,400,000  
native animals over 1 billion,

At its peak, air quality dropped to hazardous levels. The cost of dealing with the bushfires is expected to exceed the A\$4.4 billion of the 2009 Black Saturday fires, and tourism sector revenues fell below more than A\$1 billion. By 7 January 2020, the smoke had moved approximately 11,000 kilometres across the South Pacific Ocean to Chile and Argentina. As of 2 January 2020, NASA estimated that 306 million tonnes (337 million short tons) of CO2 had been emitted.

By 4 March 2020, all fires in New South Wales had been extinguished completely (to the point where there were no fires in the state for the first time since July 2019."

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### **1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

Here in NSW we have experienced an over 3 year extensive drought which has caused the drying out of many parts of NSW, some of which are/were 'wet rainforest' - never dry before.

Streams and creeks stopped flowing, in particular in the 'wet rainforests' of the Barrington Tops, NW of Newcastle, which had never happened before in the over 100 years of recorded data.

The Barrington River, near Gloucester, Jerusalem Creek near Dungog, were two.

Much of the 'wet' Gondwana forest, stretching from the Barrington Tops to Southern Queensland, Binna Burra was burnt.

These Gondwana forests have survived for many thousands of years. Many trees destroyed had been determined to be over 1000 years old. But man made climate change is drying out much of South Eastern Australia. And they burnt.

The 2019/2020 fires indicated that this was not the usual Australian drought.

All the big NSW fires - the Mt Nardi in Northern NSW, Gospers Mountain west of Sydney, the Green Wattle Creek Fire and the Currowan Fire south of Sydney were caused by lightning strikes. Which were allowed to grow over weeks and months to catastrophic size.

As, the lightning struck for all these fires in inaccessible, rugged country where firemen using fire trucks cannot access.

Untouched. As it seems using men, usually volunteers, on the ground, the usual first response to a distant bushfire is to wait for it to grow to catastrophic size. I would think this is an unacceptable practice in wealthy Australia.

From The Canberra Times, January 11, 2020 - a section of their story on the Currowan fires, for your information: lightning struck in dense state forest to their west.

Fanned by a west-north-westerly, the Currowan fire began its rapid spread on November 26 as the temperature reached 30 degrees. By the next day it had grown to 2500 hectares.

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The Currowan fire went on to spread in all directions, burning about half a million hectares and destroying hundreds of properties.

Its story began before a bolt of lightning hit somewhere in the difficult terrain of ridges and gullies in Currowan State Forest.

A decade of dry conditions, and the last two years of drought especially, had sapped moisture from the land and heightened the fuel available to burn. The drying of vegetation in the months leading up to the bushfire, and since it started, have worsened the odds for firefighters trying to stop it.

Before fire gets anywhere near them, trees have been dropping large amounts of leaves, stressed by the drought.

A combination of low humidity, dry soil and high temperatures has pushed the Currowan fire - now split by the NSW Rural Fire Service into several fires for operational reasons - from north-west of Batemans Bay to the Southern Highlands in less than six weeks.

Shoalhaven Rural Fire Service district manager Mark Williams said the fire had made runs of 12-15km, distances he hadn't seen in 30 years of firefighting.'

It is a myth that less hazard reduction over recent years and arson caused the big fires.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons father, George Fitzsimmons plus 3 other NPWS people, died from a hazard reduction burn gone wrong, out of control which is not uncommon, in the Ku-Ring-Gai Chase NP, North of Sydney, in 2000.

From the SMH, October 26, 2013.

"George was 52 when he and three other firemen were killed during what was meant to be a routine hazard-reduction burn in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park on June 8, 2000. "

June, one of the coolest months of the year, still can be risky for hazard reduction burns.

I had seen the plaque detailing this maybe 8 years ago during a walk with my bushwalking group. I had forgotten it was a hazard reduction burn.

George Fitzsimmons worked with fire-prevention crews from the Warringah Control Centre.

No wonder those who know about these hazard reduction burns and how often the weather conditions cause these burns to become uncontrollable are reluctant to rampantly burn.

From the Australian Financial Review, December 16, 2019:

"Up to 20 buildings, including homes, burned down between Sunday afternoon and the early hours of Monday morning after backburning and fire hazard reduction being conducted near Mount Wilson breached containment lines.

At least one home was lost at Mount Wilson's Wynne's Rocks, the home of the local fire chief, while around eight homes were lost near Skyline Road in Mount Tomah.

It is feared the new backburn blaze will join up with the Gospers Mountain mega fire that has been alight since late October, and has now destroyed almost three-quarters of the Wollemi National Park."

So comments by PM Morrison and many media people supporting hazard reduction burns are irresponsible to the

extreme.

And:

ABC January 10, 2020. January 9, Sky News: While firebugs remain a legitimate and serious threat, they're responsible for about 1 per cent of the more than 5.2 million hectares that have been burned in NSW this season.

It's a similar story in other states.

NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Inspector Ben Shepherd said earlier this week lightning was predominantly responsible for the bushfire crisis.

"I can confidently say the majority of the larger fires that we have been dealing with have been a result of fires coming out of remote areas as a result of dry lightning storms," he said.

PM Morrison saying more hazard reduction is the solution is just not true. From the NSW Rural Fire Service Chief Shane Fitzsimmons:

January 8, 2020 The boss of the NSW Rural Fire Service says hazard reduction is important but not a panacea for bushfire risk and has "very little effect at all" on the spread of fire in severe or extreme weather.

Who knows more about fighting bushfires - Morrison or Fitzsimmons?

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## **1.2 Preparation and planning**

There is a need for many very large water tankers to be purchased/leased and used to reduce/douse an initial bushfire started from lightning strikes. This should be an outcome of the NSW inquiry.

Other than the usual planning the RFS conducts there was no different response to the 2019/2020 fires than any preparation over the last 20 years.

Despite past inquiry outcomes, requests from knowledgeable people.

The need for many very large aerial water tankers and proaction in attempting to extinguish them early, was clearly recommended in the inquiry into the 2003 Canberra fires.

From Wikipedia: 'On 8 January 2003, lightning strikes started four fires in New South Wales, over the border but in close proximity to Canberra. Despite their proximity and very small initial sizes, low intensity, and low rate of spread, these fires were not extinguished or contained by New South Wales emergency services personnel. Subsequent inquiries into the bushfires, including the Roche report, the McLeod inquiry, and the Coroners Report, identified poor management of the initial response as a key contributor to the disaster that unfolded on 18 January 2003.

Poor management of initial response - no early use of aerial water bombers.

After burning for a week around the edges of the ACT, the fires entered the suburbs of Canberra on 18 January 2003. Over the next ten hours, four people died, over 490 were injured, and 470 homes were destroyed or severely damaged, requiring a significant relief and reconstruction effort.'

This 10 day event was estimated to cost, in 2003, around \$500million.

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This, on a much larger scale, is the outcome when governments, both State and Federal do not want to implement, spend money on recommendations from an earlier inquiry.

In not doing so lives, human and animal have been lost, homes have been destroyed, many still not replaced, businesses, farms destroyed from a direct burn, or lack of tourists.

Exclusive data from SGS Economics & Planning estimates the overall cost of these bushfires to the Australian economy has now reached \$4.1 billion. (ABC, March 10)  
This is the cost of doing nothing, ignoring past recommendations.

From the Sydney Morning Herald, January 3, 2020

Government Rejected Major Air Tanker Expansion. Requested in May 2016.

The nation's aerial firefighting centre called four years ago for a "national large air-tanker" fleet to confront a growing bushfire threat but was turned down in a federal government ruling that the task was one for the states.

The National Aerial Firefighting Centre, which oversees a fleet of 145 aircraft, warned of hotter and more extended bushfire seasons in a call on governments in May 2016 to establish the major new capability.

But the government has resisted the idea of a national water-bombing fleet for years in an argument over federal and state responsibilities and funding, raising questions over whether a bigger fleet could have slowed this summer's wildfires.

"Given suitable funding, there is an opportunity to develop, in future years, a sophisticated national large air-tanker capability for Australia," the centre told a Senate inquiry into Tasmanian bushfires.

"Firefighters are likely to face extended, hotter fire seasons in the future, with more days of extreme fire danger. Along with changing demographics and land use pattern, this is likely to increase demand for aerial firefighting resources.

"A shared, national large fixed-wing air-tanker capability is logical and is an attractive strategy."

The Senate inquiry backed the proposal but the government dismissed it in September 2017, saying it would continue its \$15 million annual support for the National Aerial Firefighting Centre without expanding the national capability.

Catastrophic bushfires occur Australia wide. In a country of 25million people it should be a Federal responsibility.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, around 18 months ago, too made a request to increase the RFS aerial firefighting capacity.

In the msm Daily Mail, January 6, 2020: Mr Fitzsimmons have also made his frustrations with the prime minister known; recently accusing the Morrison government of stalling on plans to increase funding for a national aerial firefighting fleet.

He said at a Sydney press conference on Friday, January 3, that a proposal for ongoing funding was submitted 18 months ago but had still not been implemented.

And PM Morrison ignored the pleas of 23 ex firemen, led by Greg

Mullins, in April, 2019 to purchase/lease more large water bombing aircraft. As, from their years of knowledge and observations, the coming fire season was going to be severe. And they were right.

From Greg Mullins, former NSW Fire and Rescue Commission , April 10, 2019 :

Calling on the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments to properly resource urban and rural fire services, the SES, and forestry and national parks firefighting arms. To reduce hazards, mitigate fire threats, and respond with every available tool, including large firefighting aircraft that are increasingly unavailable to us because the Northern Hemisphere faces a similar escalating bushfire threat. Another crucial tool is ongoing research into bushfire and natural hazards and what we can do differently to protect life, property and the environment.

From the ABC, 15 November 2019. from past NSW Fire and Rescue Chief Greg Mullins:

"We have tried since April to get a meeting with the Prime Minister," Mr Mullins told ABC Radio on Thursday morning. "It's clear now we won't get that meeting.

"We had some pretty simple asks that we wanted to talk to the government about.

"Funding for large aerial fire tankers. People would have seen the images the other day of the Hercules coming in and dropping in 15,000 litres of retardant at Turramurra. I watched that with great interest because I was in charge of the fire there in 1994 where 17 homes were lost. That cut the fire off immediately.

"We're only going to have seven of those [aircraft] this year. I've just come back from California and they had about 30 on one fire."

The population of California is over 39 million, using around 30 aerial tankers. Australia's population is 25 million and we might have a maximum of 7, mostly leased large air tankers. Available for a brief period of time.

A failure of the NSW and Federal Governments to resource bush firefighting capability in Australia properly.

We can only conclude that neither Federal or State Governments, wanted to spend the money.

To keep Australians safe.

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### **1.3 Response to bushfires**

Using volunteers to fight fires is the same strategy as using men to fight the enemy in WWI. But now the enemy is fire. And we are over 100 years past that time.

Aircraft has been used much more effectively in more recent wars - WWII, all wars since. To fight the enemy. Certainly they are the first form of attack. I clearly remember the Iraq war in 2003, the bombing of Baghdad.

Yet in Australia we mostly rely on cheap volunteers. When we have advanced large aerial water tankers available. Many are used in USA, Canada, Europe. But not Australia. Why not?

I think governments do not want to spend the money to keep Australians safe. Or protect our landscape, flora and fauna.

Defending Australia using our ADF, our Defence Force not an option either it seems.

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Hopefully the NSW Inquiry will suggest the Defence people and their equipment will be used in a proactive way. Before future fires grow too big.

Our taxpayer \$'s pay for them. Yet they are not used to defend Australia! Work that out!

The evidence that large aerial tankers can successfully control a catastrophic fire is clear by noting what NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean, was able to do - saving the Ancient Wollemi Pines. In the Wollemi National Park.

The Gospers Mountain fire ( October 26, 2019 - February 10, 2020 ) has burned more than 512,000 hectares, and a large part of the Wollemi National Park was burnt out by this fire.

From the SMH , December 20. On the afternoon of October 26, an unseasonably warm Saturday following a run of hot days, the wind picked up over the Blue Mountains and lightning stabbed at the ranges. One bolt made ground near a disused airstrip at Gospers Mountain, a densely grown area of the Wollemi National Park, and pricked the kindling into life. It would become the epicentre of the biggest forest fire to have started from a single ignition point that Australia has ever known.

From the Blue Mountains Gazette, January 16, 2020:

Ancient Wollemi Pines saved from Bushfires. A specialist team of remote area firefighters have helped to save the prehistoric Wollemi Pines in the Wollemi National Park from this seasons bushfires.

The Wollemi pines survived the dinosaurs and now they look like they'll survive these bushfires thanks to the work of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) firefighters and the NSW Rural Fire Service.

"Wollemi National Park is the only place in the world where these trees are found in the wild and, with less than 200 left, we knew we needed to do everything we could to save them," said NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean.

"The pines, which prior to 1994 were thought to be extinct and whose location is kept secret to prevent contamination, benefited from an unprecedented environmental protection mission."

The operation included large air tankers laying fire retardant and specialist firefighters being winched into the remote site from helicopters to set up an irrigation system in the gorge to increase moisture content of the ground fuels.

In advance of the fire, NPWS firefighters were again winched into the site to operate the irrigation system and as the fire approached, helicopters water bucketed the fire edge to reduce its impact on the groves of trees.

Obviously a strategy, with the right resourcing of the NSW RFS and National Parks and Wildlife Service, that could be used for any remote fire.  
Minister Kean deserves praise for this initiative and model for fire fighting.

Unfortunately not available for any other fire due to lack of funding.

#### 1.4 Any other matters

Global warming?

Other countries have more extreme fires than ever before including in the polar regions. In the Arctic and Antarctic, ice caps, glaciers, permafrost is melting due to a significant increase in summer temperature. In the last 50 years glaciers are melting in the high altitudes- Himalayas, Andes, Alps, Alaska, US Rockies, African Mountains.

Studies have shown other changes. Farmers notice differences in climate over their lifetime. As ex Nationals MP Katrina Hodgkinson noted on the ABC TV Drum last night, Tuesday March 10, some winemakers are moving their cool climate grapes from North East Victoria to Tasmania. Brown Bothers is one.

Why should Australia be any different? Exempt from the effects of global warming? These bushfires, as well as the extensive drought, in areas never before effected, are the first obvious example of man made climate change effecting our country.

Bjorn Lomborg, the environmentalist who often seems to support coal fired power stations to improve standards of living in some impoverished countries has noted the rapid change of weather, melting snow, climate change in his country and the world and has changed his tune:

From: lomborg.com Bjorn Lomborg: Empty Gestures on Climate Change. Dec 20, 2019.

In the above essay he suggests individuals who try to change their behaviour and reduce fossil fuel use does nothing.

But, in his final statement: The one individual action that citizens could take that would make a difference would be to demand a vast increase in spending on green-energy research and development, so that these energy sources eventually become cheap enough to outcompete fossil fuels. That is the real way to help fight climate change.

So are you able to demand more spending and policy change from our NSW coalition government to increase renewable energy availability? As a policy and for increased funding? A hopeful outcome from this NSW bushfire inquiry.

Reading from many sources business is ready to invest. I am sure you aware the myth that renewables don't provide power when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow is not true. Batteries have for many years been available for people who want to go off grid. And large batteries now are available for big arrays of renewable energy.

Lomborg doesn't believe adaption, and the continued use of fossil fuel is going to help any country. Climate change effects will worsen.

Lomborg spoke to Alan Jones, radio 2GB, on Friday morning, February 7, 2020 and repeated that the aim for all countries should be fully renewable, green energy. Jones agreed. Listen to the interview on the 2GB website.

Bjorn Lomborg, the friend of fossil fuel supporters, believes we must increase green, renewable energy.

Business does believe in anthropogenic climate change. Insurance companies in particular, as the cost of claims is steadily growing. Meaning premiums will rise for ordinary people wishing to insure their homes.

Many people may not afford insurance in future. Or many parts of



our country will be uninsurable.

Finally, to best absorb carbon dioxide, we need a major tree planting program. A useful way governments can contribute to removing excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

In Davos, Switzerland, at the World Economic Forum, January 22, 2020, a plan was launched to help nature and the climate by planting 1 trillion trees around the world in a bid to restore biodiversity and help fight climate change. US President Trump also supported this plan.

What will NSW's contribution be?

Carbon dioxide acts as a fertiliser for forest growth, making young forests potentially very strong sinks - absorbing carbon dioxide.

In fact, globally, such regrowing forests are responsible for around 60% of the total carbon dioxide removal by forests overall. Their expansion by reforestation should be encouraged.

Forests are important to society for so many reasons – biodiversity, mental health, recreation, water resources. By absorbing emissions they are also part of our available arsenal to combat climate change. It's vital we protect them.

A smarter NSW government would pay farmers to keep their trees. Trees cool the space around them. Also encourage rainfall. Cleared land increases the heat overall in NSW. And Australia.

On the Drum, ABC TV March 10, 2020, but also July 18, 2019  
"We are feeling the impacts right here, right now."

Broken Hill sheep farmer and founder of Climate Wise Agriculture, Anika Molesworth, says she's frustrated by Australia's 'she'll be right attitude' when it comes to taking action on climate change. #TheDrum.  
Spoke of temperatures of 70 degrees recorded on her cleared property.

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