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<b>Title</b>	Mr
<b>First name</b>	Craig
<b>Last name</b>	Swift-McNair

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Business owner
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<b>Submission type</b>	Organisation
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<b>Organisation making the submission (if applicable)</b>	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
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<b>Your position in the organisation (if applicable)</b>	General Manager
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<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	Public
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<b>Your story</b>	<p>Port Macquarie was an important staging point for firefighting and fire recovery efforts, due to the fact we are one of the largest regional cities in NSW.</p> <p>Twenty-eight homes were lost in fires across our LGA, along with dozens of outbuildings, farm machinery and kilometres of fencing.</p> <p>One of the fires in our LGA, which commenced in July 2019, burnt for 210 days. This fire bordered the Port Macquarie Airport and caused many months of low air quality across the region and flight disruptions on several occasions.</p> <p>This past summer also saw a major fire burning in the heart of the area of Port Macquarie known as Crestwood, which is effectively in the middle of suburbia. This fire flared up on and off from November 2019 through to early 2020 and threatened</p>
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hundreds of homes in Port Macquarie.

As a result of the above, we currently have a range of severely impacted villages and individuals throughout our LGA and the recovery process for these people and villages has really only just begun.

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**1.1 Causes and contributing factors**

- Fire control APZ's on state owned land, Councils are attempting - on a risk approach, to ensure APZ's are maintained, the same cannot be said for state owned land.
- The severity of the bushfires appears to be in part, to have been impacted by our changing climate.
- Targeted water sources for fire fighting could have been identified and established earlier. These could include recycled water sources and work on providing authority to use recycled water should be more readily available with the correct controls in place.
- Targeted site clearing in heavily vegetated rural residential areas funded as proactive preparation.

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**1.2 Preparation and planning**

- Water resources identified for emergency and community response as detailed in our response to Question 1.
- More funding and resources for current volunteer brigades.
- Sharing information on changing fire experiences in current conditions i.e. twigs are no longer just the immediate burn, any material up to 50mm diameter will spontaneously ignite, increasing heat and the fire front.
- Concern was evident on dryness of the environment with the state in drought. Could be more consideration given to building containment lines using non-traditional methods (e.g. with ADF assistance) earlier in the year.

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**1.3 Response to bushfires**

- A more coordinated approach from state agencies is required, Service NSW represents a number of agencies; however, we witnessed the complexity of cross agency tension. If Service NSW is to be the shopfront, then our communities should call one number and get the concierge service that has previously been spoken about - noting that this took some months to put in place following the fires.
- More direct financial support for Council's where existing resources are diverted to deal with recovery, as the funding model is grossly inadequate.
- There were serious limits to the amount of coordination possible between the RFS and NSWFR, often leading to delays in updates, this is due to a lack of adequate resources on the ground.

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**1.4 Any other matters**

- Economic stimulus from Government to affected businesses should have been considerably quicker and there needs to be a fund set up that can allow for this sort of emergency funding.
- Messaging during emergency was difficult to control across different platforms (social, web, TV, Radio, SMS). Warning messages were often acted on as directions/orders and this became more difficult as fire fronts stretched across many LGA borders.
- Establishing a single point of contact for disaster impacted people is critical, even in the early stages of getting a Building Impact Assessment (BIA) organised.

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