



Title	Ms
First name	Sue
Last name	Norman

I am making this submission as	Resident
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Submission type	Personal
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Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
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Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	
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Consent to make submission public	Public
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Your story	<p>I have lived in Kiah since 1982 and have observed the changes in the environment over that time. Our property is on the southern side Towamba River about halfway between the coast and the highway. we are surrounded by state forest and to the south and east by national park. The Eden Chip mill is a close neighbour and we have observed the industrial logging at close quarters over the decades.</p> <p>On January 4th I evacuated into Eden leaving my partner Mick to turn on the spray system on the house and then shelter in the fire bunker.</p> <p>He saved the house but I lost my studio and all my work of almost 40 years. When people rang to offer support and asked what they could do I replied- stop burning fossil fuels! What we and so many others had been through was what I could see for the future without properly addressing climate change.</p> <p>Kiah was badly hit with about 40 out of 70 homes lost. Now, with the virus many people are struggling in temporary</p>
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accommodation.

You can see our story at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-16/bushfire-bunker-helps-kiah-couple-save-historic-timber-cottage/11968904>

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

There can be no doubt that the three year drought and high temperatures contributed to the severity of the fires. Before that we had extremes of weather - big dumps of rain , long dry periods and unrelenting winds. This is climate change and how it is going to be into the future.

The other cause of the border fire's severity was the condition of the bush. The extent of wood chipping had changed the forests to vast areas of regrowth. Small trees, close together, are perfect fire fuel.

The whole wood chipping experiment can now be said to have failed. We were told that the forests grow back in 40 years- the evidence shows that trees grow back but the old growth integrity has been lost forever. To continue with wood chipping is wishful thinking- not science. Can we afford the cost of this in the future?

1.2 Preparation and planning

One of the amazing new developments in this fire was the extensive use of on line information. We could see the satellite view of the fire as it happened and use weather information to plan our movements. I was able to warn Mick that the fire was close because of the RFS site and he could get into the bunker in time to save his life.

One frustration was that the information cut out at the border. We were under attack from the fire that originated near Mallacoota but couldn't see the shape of that fire in Victoria.

1.3 Response to bushfires

It's been disappointing and frightening to hear the promotion of the idea that the fires were caused by lack of burning and then arson.

The upshot of these lies is that people are unable to learn real lessons from what they have been through. Their trauma is being exploited to attack environmentalists and prevent action on climate change. Now we see our neighbours flattening their trees and plowing their hillsides, destroying what little vegetation was growing and protecting the land from severe erosion. The river has run black from the rains after the fires and life in the water has suffered a delayed attack. We need honest appraisals of what happened. Our lives and the life in our environment needs humans to use our brains wisely to face the difficult future we have plunged the world into.

1.4 Any other matters

The question for the forests of NSW is what happens to the burnt areas now. Life has been beaten back. Vast areas are scorched black and empty. Rainforests are destroyed. It seems that we had a precious vibrant environment that has been lost forever. We blew it.

How do we manage these landscapes now?

Can we protect the values of life diversity, carbon storage and water security or do we cast the forest as the enemy and money as the reason for everything?

Can we get smarter and learn from our mistakes?

I hope so.

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