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I am making this submission as	Other
Submission type	Personal

Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	

Consent to make submission public	Public
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Your story	<p>To Mr. Dave Owens and Professor Mary O’Kane,</p> <p>This is my submission to the Independent NSW Bushfire Inquiry.</p> <p>My name is Victoria Adams, I am 27 years old and I live with my partner in Kiama, NSW. By trade I am an outdoor professional who has worked as an outdoor education instructor, an outdoor education coordinator and an outdoor tourism guide. As this last fire season was starting up, I was driving back to South Eastern Australia from a 7 month bushwalk guiding job in Alice Springs. On the way I was lucky enough to enjoy the Kangaroo Island Wilderness Walk and its associated infrastructure, before it was burnt this January.</p> <p>Fortunately for me I was safe staying with family in Sydney during the fire season. After applying, I was offered a job instructing at Timbertop (Geelong Grammar School) located in</p>
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the Victorian High Country, to start in February. One of the main reasons I turned this job down and chose instead to rely on savings for the summer was the foreboding sense that the fire season would threaten vast areas across South Eastern Australia.

My partner accepted work coordinating 3 programs, on a casual contract, for Outward Bound Australia. This was about a month of non-stop work worth about \$5000, a lot of money for us. These programs were to take place in Namadgi and Kosciusko National Parks. Normally, outdoor education organisations can move programs into other national parks where required to avoid local hazards including fire or flood. It was a big shock to everyone when most of Outward Bound Australia's programs had to be cancelled/postponed with no options of relocations due to such wide-spread fire activity.

These fires seriously impacted the outdoor industries of education and tourism in NSW. Many of these businesses, relying on the use of outdoor places, had to entirely shut their operations whilst there were active fires across the state. During this time many workers lost income, and businesses were set back. This was a huge blow alone, but followed by Covid-19, I fear it may have been a death-sentence for some outdoor businesses and has certainly caused severe hardship for employees, especially those on casual contracts.

As a person who loves the outdoors, I spend a lot of time outside camping and hiking. Likewise, my friends and colleagues spend a lot of time outside also, paddling, canyoning, climbing, biking etc. It seems everyone in South Eastern Australia spent the summer indoors. It came as a huge surprise to see new fires popping up in coastal national parks, at the same time as in the Alpine National Parks. It felt like they were everywhere, and even unaffected national parks were closing simply because of the logistical constraints posed by such extensive firefighting and risk across our region. It should be recognised that many residents of NSW greatly value their time in the outdoors, and the park closures alone, during and after the fires, was a loss for many.

But of course, these personal experiences felt like nothing as I watched fires erupting and spreading on state fire maps, threatening people's property and lives. Like many we fretted about friends, family and for us, beloved outdoor businesses, many of whom are not-for-profit, as fires approached their properties. Some properties were lost, some were saved, and some were left unthreatened. Thankfully no one we knew was lost. But it hit me hard my close friend who lives in the Bega Valley told me about the men in Cobargo, from the perspective of someone from their community.

For me, watching wide-spread, severe fires move through so many national parks was very sad. This is because I know and love so many of the National Parks that were burnt, and have spent a great deal of time in them including (but not limited to): Namadgi, Stirling Ranges, Kosciusko, Budawang, Nadgee, Flinders Chase, and areas of the Blue Mountains.

I have always imagined buying a rural block to live on. I know many people older than me who have lived this dream. But I see the way they have to worry about their lives and homes during the fire season and knowing that fire seasons will become worse with climate change, and I could expect to have a property for say 50 years, I am despairingly starting to let go of that dream.

Prior to the fires I was engaged with advocating for more action on climate change. During the fires I felt it was important to continue this work because the fire season was so extended and

because it was so relevant to the issue. Most people have been very respectful and supportive for my volunteering in this area. However, some people had angry conversations with me about how it's 'the greens' faults' or 'it's all arson' and the like and I was disturbed by the stories portrayed in some unsavoury media coverage in Australia translating into public opinion.

After a difficult fire season this really felt like insult to injury. Not for me, but to all of us in NSW and Australia. We need to be clear with the public about the role climate change plays in extending fire seasons and increasing the number of days of dangerous fire conditions. It is shameful that some people in our communities don't even believe in climate change, and I'm certainly not saying it's their fault. As climate change is becoming worse, I believe that this is a very dangerous trend and our politicians should be role modelling the acceptance of science and truth.

I have explained how the fire season impacted my work, my industry, outdoor recreation, my activism, my future, my friends and family, and caused grief for impacted places.

What I would like to see in the wake of this last fire season is enhanced climate action at a state level. I am grateful that NSW aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. However, I am concerned with reports of the states inadequate progress in tackling climate change – an example of which is the Climate Council's 2019 report Ageing and unprepared: Energy in New South Wales. I want NSW to adopt strong enough policy to ensure it is on the path to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times. I hope to see NSW move from being a climate action laggard into a leader.

Specifically, I would like to see:

- Huge reductions in NSW's emissions in the near-term, including by urgently phasing out all coal fired power stations and rapidly transitioning to 100% renewable energy.
- Ecosystems kept intact to keep carbon stored and biodiversity protected, by ending deforestation in NSW and banning logging of native forest.
- Coal-exports from NSW reassessed for compatibility to the Paris Agreement, and appropriately reduced.

Thank you very much for your time in reading my submission and your important work in this matter.

Kind Regards,

Victoria Adams

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1.2 Preparation and planning

1.3 Response to bushfires

1.4 Any other matters

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