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<b>Title</b>	Mrs
<b>First name</b>	Maureen
<b>Last name</b>	Nathan

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<b>I am making this submission as</b>	Business owner
<b>Submission type</b>	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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<b>Consent to make submission public</b>	Public
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<b>Your story</b>	<p>Mogo was established on the far south coast of NSW during the goldrush of the 1850's The tiny town has continued to punch above its weight even after the closure of its last goldmine, as recently as 1984, co-incidentally when I moved to the South Coast from Lockhart in the Riverina</p> <p>I became part of the Revitalisation as a heritage town during the 1990's, purchasing a property for my Self managed super fund. Mogo has flourished in recent years as a popular tourist destination, until the catastrophic New Years eve bushfires which erased much of its history and charm, along with the homes, businesses and livelihoods of many of its few hundred inhabitants, and my personal venture, a thriving tourist and educational facility known as The Original Gold Rush Colony (TOGRC). It has been all but razed to dirt having been progressively developed and expanded over the past twenty</p>
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years by myself (and to a minor degree my Mother) as patron, champion and mentor,

I am now suffering with ovarian cancer, and have no possibility of rejuvenating or revitalising my beloved facility within the timeframe allowed by my diagnosis. I am rendered no less passionate by my ill fortune in expounding the virtues of the Colony as a self-funding social, historical, educational, and philanthropic community which has earned its right to exist, and which will continue to give generously to the larger Australian community given the right leadership and funding. I am demoralised and in grief over the destruction by the 'red steer'.

Born in South Africa in 1947 to a Jewish family of Russian, Polish and German heritage, I migrated with my family to Australia in 1960. Of limited means, we settled in Parramatta where my father practised as a GP and I attended Parramatta High School. I qualified as a pharmacist at Sydney University in 1966. I worked variously as an importer and vendor of cheese, a lobbyist for the cheese industry, a pharmacist, a taxi driver, a consultant to the wine industry, as well as earning a second degree as an Oenologist at Charles Sturt University.

In 1977, my son and I moved to Lockhart, NSW, and then to Batehaven on the south coast in 1984. In both instances, I bought, expanded, and later sold pharmacies, rising to become a board member of the organisation representing NSW pharmacies, and creating the nationwide Pharmacist Advice Group.

In 1999, with my recently widowed mother, I bought the struggling 8 year old facility of Old Mogo Town. I researched the bushfire mapping, and was satisfied at the time that the 3 borders with the Mogo State Forest would not provide a hazard. I had already had a long and fruitful relationship with many of the artisans, including Peter Walsh. Most of them were in the Mogo Bush Fire service and RFS and together with their knowledge and my rural years, I believed the property to be sound. I then set about rebuilding, improving and expanding Old Mogo Town, which we rebranded as The Original Gold Rush Colony (TOGRC), with funds drawn from the sale of my pharmacy. I added accommodation in 2 stages in 2002 and 2008. The BAL etc and the Setbacks were adjusted just as we broke ground, and the construction adjusted. As Managing Director, this became my business and philanthropic focus, which has, without government assistance, produced a small profit in each of the last 5 years. It may be perceived that The Original Gold Rush Colony was purely a commercial venture, providing an authentic living museum for local tourists, offering premium accommodation at an affordable price, and delivering \$750,000 annually into the local community. Some \$430,000 of that money was directed to local wages, to be recycled through the community, whilst another \$300,000 went directly to suppliers in the local region. These figures do not include the additional revenue generated by the delivery of busloads of visitors to Mogo on a daily basis. Whilst this activity has been its commercial focus, it has been so much more than that.

TOGRC is set on an elevated block of 4.57 hectares, just 200 metres off the Princes Highway and town centre. With onsite accommodation for 140 people (including disabled access), it brings to life the Australian mining community of 170 years ago, winning multiple awards for tourism and education, and providing a hands-on, live-in immersion for over 10,000 children annually in the "Gold and Australiana" core component of the NSW curriculum for years 5 and 6. Much of that content was delivered by local Kooris, adding an additional element of indigenous culture to the educational experience, not easily accessible elsewhere.

My inclusive employment philosophy underwrote job opportunities for a wide range of locals, drawn from able and disabled, indigenous and non-indigenous, and those undergoing rehabilitation. These people were employed as guides,

educators, administrators, gardeners, cleaners and caretakers, teaching them both business and practical skills, preparing them for ongoing employment, and emphasizing the ethos of self-reliance and community engagement. TOGRC was a popular work experience choice for high school and TAFE students. It further provided, without charge, a base and meeting place for community guilds such as local woodworkers, machinery enthusiasts, lapidarists, spinners and weavers, and musical groups, comprising over 250 such visitors every week..

It is, without doubt, a lot more than just an historical, educational and tourist entertainment resource. It is the very heart of a small and racially mixed community and the quintessence of community spirit, lifting the soul and spirit of all who work there or visit. Amazingly, it has done so without contributions, subsidies, grants, concessions or endowments from local, state or federal governments, with the single exception of a dollar for dollar grant to build a maze. In this fact, alone, it must be unique in all Australia, but it is a reflection of the independent enterprise of myself and my team that I became successful in this enterprise without the interference or support of governments.

Sadly, the 2019 bushfires have changed all that. The facility is now lifeless, deep in ashes, and only the burnt pikes of leafless trees are left standing amongst the few remaining structures of what was until recently a thriving facility. Those touched by the loss include not only the thousands of tourists visiting Mogo each year, but also all the local businesses those tourists supported, the hundreds of schools who relied on the facility, the employees who are now without a job, the Mogo and Eurobodalla community guilds without a meeting place, the tourist industry network of the far south coast, and the custodians of Australian history. The TOGRC was a vital link in the chain of tourism, education, employment, community, history and welfare serving the south coast and the greater Australian community, a chain immutably weakened by its loss.

Now I have tried to negotiate the plethora of government grants and subsidies available to assist in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of fire-affected communities, as I believe my loss has been directly caused by the continual layers of protocols and policies imposed and self regulated by State Forest. OEH, RFS as to handling of Forest management, in regard to fuel load, logging, brush and debris for so called animal habitat, and locking up of forest trails etc. This grant process has been a additional nightmare.

TOGRC as an institution has earned its place of honour, not only in the heart of the tiny community of Mogo, but in the broader Australian community. Whether it be as a self-sustaining educational and tourist facility, a provider of employment to indigenous, disabled or emergent workers, a community centre to facilitate and strengthen community values, or a business opportunity and function centre,

The park map of the property with its 70 items ( 47 building and displays) is included in the images. [www.goldrushcolony.com.au](http://www.goldrushcolony.com.au) I have been heartened by support from the local community that echo what I have written above. There have been thousands on the memories facebook page. Herewith 2 examples:

From: Maria Walsh

Sent: Monday, 20 January 2020 3:16 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Mogo Devastation

Dear Maureen,

Despite the fire devastation of our town, it was nice to catch up with you briefly and reflect on how Mogo was prior to the fires.

Following from our discussion, we are both deeply distressed for the people who have lost their business in Mogo. We are

concerned that due to Council red tape, that some of these businesses so critical to Mogo, including Old Mogo Town, may never be rebuilt. Or, more importantly, built to modern standards, the town will lose its historical uniqueness.

We attach some newspaper clippings of the original concept of Mogo Village in the 80's, which eventually came to fruition.

As a neighbour of Old Mogo Town, we watched, advised and even helped the early building of Old Mogo Town, which you further developed under your ownership, making this a major attraction to the village of Mogo.

Maria and I are devastated we have lost our family home, which we built in 1984 and never thought it would succumb to a bushfire. I have spent 27 years in the Rural Bushfire Service and helped protect Mogo Village during the January 1994 bushfires. At this time, I placed standpipes and 63mm hoses along Veitch Street, Sydney Street (Princes Highway) and Annett Street. These were used to suppress ember attacks with a positive effect. My enquiries have revealed that the Mogo Fire Brigade did not use this resource at this recent fire on 31/12/19. During the 80's and 90's, our Brigade carried out fuel reduction loads in and around Mogo Village, including Mogo forest to the west of Veitch Street and north of Annett Street. This service ceased at the request of the New South Wales State Government as directed by Eurobodalla Shire Council. To the best of my knowledge, no hazard reduction has been carried out in these areas since that time. It is my opinion that the recent fire was far hotter, faster and therefore more intense than what I experienced in the January 1994 bushfires.

It is also worth noting that historic photos of Mogo around the early 1900's distinctly show less vegetation in and around the perimeters of Mogo village. I can't help feel that we have been let down by the way our Forests, National Parks and Bushfire services are managed these days.

In saying this, to move forward, Council should set up a Village Advisory Council to recommend the following:

- \* How the village can be rebuilt
- \* Simplify DA certification process
- \* Simplify DA building application process
- \* What fees and charges can be waived
- \* How the village is protected from bushfire threat in the future
- \* How we change and resource Mogo Bushfire Brigade and resource it to be a more effective village asset

As you know, whilst we now do not reside in the Shire, we are still very attached to Mogo and would be very keen to assist where we can.

Wishing you all the very best and sincerely hope that you have good fortune in your endeavours to re-develop Old Mogo Town.

Kind regards,  
Peter and Maria Walsh

Mogo - Southern Star 25.5.84.jpg

Mogo - Southern Star 1.6.84.jpg

Eurobodalla Shire Council accountability page

I was mortified to see the damage done to Old Mogo Town which was one of the finest of its type. We always took visitors to explore it and show them how miners and others lived in the 19th century. My grandson spent many happy times washing for gold. But over the years I have become increasingly concerned about the fuel loads building up around the village (and throughout Eurobodalla for that matter). Frequently my wife or I would comment "there's a bushfire waiting to happen.". Why the Council didn't push the State Government much harder for more commonsense handling of forest and land management is beyond me, unless, of course, it suited the agenda of Council management. Now the community has lost so much, and individuals have suffered even more. This is a time for the community to demand commonsense action such as Mr Walsh has outlined. We don't need Royal Commissions or inquiries. We need to place protection of people and property ahead of "endangered species" who end up non existent once the fires come. And please, please Council, do not bury the rebuilding of Mogo under a ton of red and green tape. Fast track its resurrection and then make sure it is adequately protected by removing the risks.

Darwinia Terrace

Eurobodalla Shire Council accountability page

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

Causes and contributing factors:

I believe that there has been a gradual evolution of an environmental agenda towards a wilderness approach.

1. Training of foresters etc has followed that agenda, instead of being broad based.
2. National parks, forests and crown lands have been locked up, with a concomitant degradation of trails, tracks and traffickable roads which used to serve as fire breaks.
3. Powers have been vested in bodies that have seen fit to change fire and forest management from the local Bush Fire Brigade to those including the OEH and Fire services alike
4. Being a signatory to the Kyoto protocol has resulted in untenable restrictions on management of large areas of vegetation, both public and privately owned
5. Local RFS who understand the local areas have been hampered in their hazard reduction burns by the many layers of protocols and procedures, as to timing and conditions.
6. As far as my property was concerned, The logging of the Mogo State Forest, and leaving the brush on the floor created an untenable fuel load exacerbated by the prolonged dry conditions.
7. My understanding as a 'girl guide, cub-scout leader and camper' is that a forest fire requires, dry fuel load, dry weather conditions, winds and of course the spark to set it off. I believe that many of those fires ignited through arson are as a result of an uneducated community who does not understand the flammability of the natural species etc etc.
8. Like Peter Walsh indicated in his letter, I too believe this fire was hotter, faster and more intense than that which we experienced in 1994.
9. We live in a country of weather extremes. As I write, the drought which has plagued us of recent times, has broken in many areas
10. The lack of pre-emptive water conservation through dams etc have aggravated the ability to fight the fires which will always come in dry times.

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### **1.2 Preparation and planning**

One of my staff has been a volunteer fire fighter for many years. I believe the training and support they receive is adequate. However they have been restricted in their hands on fire reduction because of procedures and protocols that have evolved for the last 30 years.

Planning and Preparation should learn from the Aboriginal techniques of regular hazard reduction cool burns.

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### 1.3 Response to bushfires

I believe Five Points should come from Bushfire Enquiry number 58.

1 , Trained and experienced foresters need to be appointed to maintain safe and healthy public forests. They should be given authority and resources for reducing fuel loads especially in national parks and forests by cool season burning, or by combinations of grazing, timber harvesting, slashing/mulching and collecting dead fire-wood. Private landowners must be enabled and obliged to become fire safe, subject only to local fire wardens.

2, Wide clear trafficable roads, tracks and firebreaks need to be created and maintained through the forests and around towns and private properties. In fire seasons, these patrolled fire-barriers will help to confine any fire to one sector and provide a prepared line from which to back burn if there is an approaching fire. We should also increase the penalties for arson in times of high fire danger..

3, Abolish restrictions on the management of "protected" vegetation reserves on private land – especially those on private land sterilised to fulfil government Kyoto Protocol promises. In Particular abolish restrictions under Local Government and State Government vegetation protection rules and regulations.

Governments have created these fire hazards by trying to wrap vast areas of vegetation in cotton wool and green tape (both of which are flammable). Sadly, Government "protection" of flora and fauna has proved to be the fiery kiss of death.

4, Build more dams and weirs to provide water for fire-fighting. These would provide fire havens for humans, animals and vegetation and be productive during good times.

5, Decentralise fuel and forest management out of the cities and into the regions. Widen the education platforms so that the 'green agenda' is not the only one taught to forest managers and park rangers,

City-based politicians and bureaucrats have done enormous harm by locking up land and opposing fuel load reduction. Decisions on vegetation risk management should be handed to property owners, park rangers, forest managers and rural fire wardens.

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### 1.4 Any other matters

My husband and I were evacuated from our home at Longbeach 4 times this summer. The crown land 2 doors from us has been allowed to become overgrown since I purchased in 2001. Our home was saved by the southerly change each time. We live in constant fear that our safe little pocket that did not suffer this summer, will be the next casualty.

Every summer we have young campers who light camp fires and bonfires, and we have had to call the fire-brigade on at least four occasions. We believe that the access paths to the beach are not sufficient for emergencies such as we saw this summer. The 'environmental' attitude of habitat before homes and leaves before lives, may yet cost our home and lives.

I believe that all layers of government are responsible for the mess we are in, and that a serious change in methodology must happen.

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### Upload files

20200101-101010.jpg - [Download File](#)

80816070-500565533907722-60570923048108032-n.jpg - [Download File](#)

Park-Map-2013-updated-to-2017-proof-3.jpg - [Download File](#)

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