

**Submission Number: NND.001.00722**

**Submission Of: David Fletcher and Simon King**

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What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise?

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? RFS Snowy River Group Captains

### Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

- 1) Strong community support and engagement.
- 2) Much improved information gathering and disseminating with improved web based technologies.
- 3) Section 44 funding enables resourcing fire-fighting efforts that would otherwise be well beyond local brigades.
- 4) Brigades are much better prepared now, with some having built Divisional Command capabilities into their fire stations after previous fire emergencies.
- 5) Exposure to more large and intense fires has increased volunteer capability through experience.
- 6) Considerable decision making autonomy was given to on-ground divisional commanders.

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

- 1) Local knowledge, experience and personal connections were overwhelmed by the creation of a large Incident Management Team, resulting in simple interactions becoming slow, frustrating and cumbersome experiences.
- 2) A lack of hazard reduction burning across all land tenures resulted in high fuel loads, increasing fire intensity and making fire-fighting efforts more difficult.
- 3) A lack of fire trail construction and maintenance, and problems with permission to work in National Park land caused unnecessary delays.
- 4) The Current RFS staff recruitment model is totally unsuited to RFS needs, as it makes employing locals with the necessary local knowledge extremely difficult.
- 5) Policy decisions made to suit Sydney metropolitan brigade needs do not always suit rural areas.
- 6) Slow payment of contractors places huge pressure on their cash-flow during a long campaign fire.
- 7) The move to more mobile phone based technologies in RFS vehicles is problematic for areas with little or no mobile coverage. More mobile towers are needed.

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?

There have been scores of enquiries into bush fires over the years: we recommend that this huge resource of knowledge be used, rather than shelved (as has unfortunately often been the case in the past).

It is not a coincidence that the worst fire season in our history occurred after the hottest and driest year on record. The available science strongly supports the view that hotter and drier seasons will become more common and, consequently, more intense fires will become more common and more difficult to control. During this last fire emergency, available resources were stretched beyond their limits. Unless resources are expanded in the future, we have every reason to believe that future fire emergencies will be totally beyond current capabilities.

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