



Dear Inspector-General of Emergency Management Tony Pearce,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season. My personal details are below:

Name: Anda Banikos

Email: 

Gender: female

Age: 55-64

Privacy preference: I would like the Inspector-General to make my submission publicly available

My personal story of the fires:

Physically, I was fortunate to only have smoke issues - smokey tank water, poor visibility and inability to go outside for work on our property due to the very low air quality.

Psychologically, witnessing the huge scale of environmental destruction caused me great distress and anxiety.

I feel enormous concern for the future of life on our planet because of the effects of Climate Change. This summer's bush fires are a symptom of Climate Change. Climate Change is being driven by human agency, in particular overuse of fossil fuels and excessive land clearing.

To reduce Climate Change, we should immediately cease fossil fuel extraction projects that are not yet in operation and progressively scale down those that are. We should immediately cease all native forest logging and timber harvesting, including in those forests which have been burnt. The fallen and burnt trees still provide valuable habitat and support for whatever parts of the ecosystem have survived the fires. We should invest in renewable energy and eco-tourism to create new jobs. We have the technology to do this.

My response to term of reference: Consider all challenges and implications for bushfire preparedness arising from increasingly longer and more severe bushfire seasons as a result of climate change:

Bushfire risk is being greatly increased due to the prolonged high temperatures we are experiencing as a result of Climate Change. The resultant extreme drought, dry fuels and soil are making bushfire planning and risk assessment more difficult, if not impossible, as conditions have been unprecedented. There are ever decreasing windows of opportunity for fire management burns. The

CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology have both predicted that Climate Change will increase fire weather risk in south-eastern Australia. In Victoria, 1.2 million hectares of forest and 300 homes were destroyed in the past fire season.

A large proportion of Climate Change can be attributed to the pollution caused by the burning of fossil fuels. To reduce Climate Change, we should immediately cease fossil fuel extraction projects that are not yet in operation and progressively scale down those that are. The Victorian Government should commit to upholding the objectives of the Paris Agreement and make every effort to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees. Each of us must make changes in our consumption and lifestyle, if we want to see a liveable future for our children.

My response to term of reference: In considering effectiveness of Victoria's operational response to the 2019-20 fire season, IGEM should particularly consider, "planning and response mechanisms to protect biodiversity threatened by bushfire":

The tragic losses inflicted on Victoria's biodiversity during the 2019-20 bushfire season must be recognised. They should not be exacerbated by practices such as burning out islands of unburnt vegetation within a fire zone or salvage logging. Both of these destroy what vestiges of habitat there is left for surviving wildlife - including the invertebrates and small digging vertebrates that are so necessary for the cycle of regrowth.

All native forest logging should be immediately halted, as the level of ecological destruction over the 2019-20 bushfire season has not been assessed. Biodiversity assessment and recovery should be a priority and would also provide work for people in the fire-affected regions.

My response to term of reference: Review of all opportunities and approaches to bushfire preparedness, including different methods of fuel and land management (for example 'cool burning', mechanical slashing, integrated forest management, traditional fire approaches) to protect life and property as well as ecological and cultural values:

Planned burns and other fuel reduction processes must be targeted to areas where they can be of most use. It is sensible to concentrate them around towns that are in need of protection. Broad scale burning reduces the variety of habitat available to wildlife - many creatures need tree hollows and hollow logs for shelter and these are destroyed by fire. Victoria is in the midst of an extinction crisis, with many species either vulnerable or critically endangered. Biodiversity must be taken into account when planning burns, as well as consideration of the age and type of forest - old growth forests are historically less flammable than younger, post-fire growth. We have lost so much of our old growth forest cover, we must protect what is left.

Aboriginal peoples have managed the land and forests for millenia, we should listen to them and work with them to protect and support this wonderful Country.

I would like to add the following:

Our old growth forests are of great scientific, cultural and aesthetic value. We have not begun to properly catalogue or understand the myriad species that coexist there. They hold potential scientific and medicinal advances that would benefit us all.

I would like to make the following recommendations:

- * Immediately stop all native forest logging, instead instigate a biodiversity assessment and recovery program
- * phase out the fossil fuel use that drives Climate Change in favour of renewable energy sources

Yours sincerely,

Anda Banikos

Fish Creek 3959