



Dear Inspector-General for Emergency Management,

Please find below my submission to the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry.

My name is Anne, I am retired and I have a strong connection with the natural environment. When I was 4 years old my parents first took me to Wilson's Promontory National Park in Victoria. We lived in the heavily industrialised Latrobe Valley and I had no idea that such a magic place could exist.

From that time on I have gone back to the 'Prom' almost every year for the last 60 years to commune with nature.

Wilson's Promontory instilled in me a love of and respect for the natural environment.

I camp out in it whenever I can to feed my soul – at least twice a year.

Victoria's precious wild environments and unique biodiversity must be protected not only to save our native flora and fauna but also to maintain the well being of Victorians.

Christmas 2019 was spent away from my Melbourne home with my family at my sister's house in Bruthen, Victoria.

The East Gippsland fires were raging to the north and east of the town.

On 30th December a northwest wind was driving the fire very close to Bruthen.

It seems likely that a 'Firenado' developed, and independent of the wind direction, it headed south, and burnt a large area of forest and 15 houses in the wooded hamlet of Sarsfield. The fire services at Bruthen had no way of knowing that this was going to happen. All they could do was chase the fire but were driven back by the ferocious heat intensity. One of the firefighters later said that to get any closer would have melted the truck.

[In a similar occurrence near the Victorian border in NSW, a firefighter died when a firenado lifted up the 10 tonne firetruck and flipped it over on to its roof]

Before I left Bruthen, small helicopters periodically hovered over the Tambo River, taking water into their dangling hoses to release onto the fires. My family and I despaired at what little effect this would have on the by now 30 kilometre firefront.

Especially that we knew that a request for a much more effective water bomber fleet had been rejected by the Federal Coalition government.

Once back in Melbourne, I thought my heart would break as I watched the media images of the East Gippsland bushfires. The enormity of human, wildlife and stock suffering and destruction of town and forest was devastating.

The catastrophic summer bushfires not only killed our precious land dwelling wildlife.

In mid January East Gippsland had unseasonable heavy rains. As the under story of the forests had been burnt to ash, there was no growth or forest debris to hold the rain, which rushed across the ground, taking tonnes of ash and soil with it, into the rivers.

My sister recounted that the Tambo River became a muddy grey colour. For 3 days fish were at the surface gasping for air and then they were gone. The river was so thick with ash and sediment that the fish died from lack of oxygen. The water dragons and the family of tortoises were also gone.

Climate change in Australia has caused drought leading to forest fuel loads to severely dry out. The forests are so dry that current fuel reduction burn techniques have become too dangerous until fire prevention services can be trained in "culture burning" by Aboriginal experts. We have never before experienced fire fronts hundreds of kilometres long. Or the high incidence of firenadoes, where the ferociousness of the fire can cause twisting updrafts kilometers high to reach cool air and produce lightning clouds. Lightning from these clouds can strike the earth 50 kilometres ahead of the firefront, making firefighting extremely difficult. As such all firefighters need to be confident that they have as much equipment as they need to do the best job that they can.

In mid March I drove from Canberra to Melbourne via Cann River in East Gippsland through hundreds of kilometers of badly burnt forest. These forests are starting to regenerate with concealed eucalyptus buds breaking out as new shoots. Although most wildlife was burnt along with the forest, there are survivors and animals that have been nursed back to health and now ready to be released. They must be given the chance to repopulate. Forests must be given the chance to recover.

## Recommendations

### PREVENTION

Crucial - Reduce Victoria's carbon emission targets No new fossil fuel projects and investment in renewable energy

Increased Firefighting Fund in recognition of increasing bushfire severity due to climate change

Lobby the Federal Government purchase at least 6 large air-tankers to be used by the States for quelling bushfires before they get to a catastrophic state.

[4 years ago the National Aerial Firefighting Centre called for a "national large air-tanker" fleet to confront a growing bushfire threat, warning of hotter and more extended bushfire seasons.]

Establish a Culture Burning Training Program in which Aboriginal experts teach fuel reduction burning techniques to regional fire services who are keen to implement them.

### RECOVERY

No logging - to recover Forests and the Creatures within them

It is crucial that there be no "salvage" logging in burnt forest.

Also, as so much forest has been burnt, logging in all native forests must end to protect the unburnt forest environment and biodiversity that we have left.

Ensure that sufficient money, people and resources are put in place so that nature can recover.

Develop and implement recovery plans for threatened species, to avoid further species extinctions

I have not suffered any personal loss from the bushfires, as thousands of Australians have. Yet I have been greatly impacted by them as previously mentioned (media images and coverage). At the time of the fires, Victorians were in sorrow. The mega fires that we saw this summer must never occur again.

I know that some of the measures that I have called for will be unpopular in some quarters but NOW is crunch time.

The logging industry has been aware for decades that there is huge public opposition to logging in native forests and that a time would come, sooner than later, when they would have to cease. Well that time is NOW. With much of our forests incinerated over summer, the time for industry plundering is over.

The Victorian Government may not like being called on to ban new fossil fuel projects and invest in renewable energy But the time has come to do so. If the Labour Government does not want to deal with climate change causing extreme climate conditions, leading to extreme environmental events, they must support the transition.

Funding for the measures I have proposed will probably be objected to, but I counter that it is a small price to pay to avoid another, possibly worse, catastrophic fire season.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission. If you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission I can be reached at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,  
Anne Boyd

Yours sincerely,  
Anne boyd Boyd

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Please reply to Anne Boyd at [REDACTED]

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