



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: Jennifer Gilliver

Email: 

Gender: Female

Age: 65-74

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

My personal story of the fires:

Hello,

Although Beechworth was not on fire during the latest dreadful bushfires, Beechworth was on the cusp and the possibility was very real that if wind changes happened at the wrong time Beechworth and the Indigo Shire, could also join the horrid impact of destruction around them.

We live on 25 acres, in a beautiful spot right next to the Stanley Forest. I treasure this area, that I often can be found in, riding my horse, or walking along with friends. I was very anxious at this time that if the fire got into The Stanley Forest that many, many properties would be affected.

I chose to evacuate my four horses to the amazing facilities that were offered for livestock at the Wangaratta Livestock Exchange. My four horses lived there for a full week, with some other horses belonging to friends of mine. We went there everyday, taking shifts on morning, afternoon and night time, with feeds and checks. The people there were very kind and welcoming, even supplying hay for the animals, to save people having to lug in huge quantities that would be required for all of the horses there. The facilities of kitchen, toilets and showers were offered to everyone.

Luckily after a week I felt the immediate danger had lessened and I bought my horses home. Albeit it the smoke hazzard. which of course I had to endure on my previous hazardous week of night drives to Wangaratta and of course in Beechworth.

As I referred to earlier I live next to the Stanley Forest in Beechworth. The forest is littered with, in my opinion an overload of debris and trees that have regrown. Several years prior there was a fire through the forest which actually started outside the front of our property from an power line incident. This fire was horrific and was responsible for killing two people in Mudgegonga, as well as the destruction of many properties.

The forest has recovered, but with a mass of thin tall trees, that I feel would be better selectively culled with an excavator, to allow for the growth of the older more established trees and leave some of the new ones with room to grow. In my opinion if there are too many close tall skinny trees it does nothing to discourage fires. I have heard that in the past this was what happened throughout forests, to manage them. That and regular cool burns. I understand that a percentage of dead wood is necessary to keep things balanced with wildlife, flora and fauna. But I also think it would be a great advantage if around all of the road and track verges throughout the forest that firewood collection was encouraged. Leaving of course plenty of fallen wood in the inner parts of the forest but with select thinning of the skinny trees so the fires were not so prone to leap from one tree to the other in the earlier stage of a fire that may break out.

The Stanley Forest has a massive amount of blackberry in it, (as in many other forests) that keeps growing and taking over. I know this takes man power to manage this sort of thing but a rethink of resources about this would be a good area to investigate. A government increase off employment of staff to carry out clean ups. There is enough work available to create jobs for many people. Getting people off welfare payments and returning taxes to the communities. Creates good moral and a sense of pride in our landscape. And again allowing more people to contribute to the tax system. Good management of the forests and national parks must, in the long run, not only save lives and properties but save a massive amount of money and resources, that is used to fight these mighty fires that have been burning, not to mention the massive costs of rebuilding afterwards and cleaning up the aftermath.

It would be great if both the government and insurance companies were to get together to collaborate on considering a mass influx of employment opportunities for people to pave the way forward for a better system. Especially in this time when so many people have lost their jobs and are receiving Job Seeker allowances. It would be so much better if those people were employed in something useful that every Australian would appreciate and get the benefit from. Thus of course giving back to the community in taxes, and spending their wages in their communities, making the money move around and benefitting a lot of people.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Gilliver

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