



**Name:** Wendy Radford

**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:**

My family and I were impacted by the fires only in the sense that we had to cancel our usual summer holidays at Point Hicks/Thurra River/Mueller River National Parks. For decades up to 15 family members and friends traditionally have extended holidays down there, and we usually stop at the smaller towns along the way to spread the economic benefits of a motel stay and buying supplies, take away etc. This year we could not do this so we stayed in Central Victoria.

We were heartbroken to see the damage that the fires have done to this beautiful natural area, to which we all feel a great connection. The children stared in disbelief, and the adults could somehow begin to know how the first Australians must have felt to see their country so destroyed and decimated. We could not bare to think of the animals, reptiles and birds, the carnage and damage to the likelihood of their survival. Emotionally, the fires left scars that will not heal until this bush heals.

Living in the Central Victorian forests (Greater Bendigo National Park is on our doorstep) we do not fear wildfire. And, indeed, we had none this year. There has been no fire out of control in forests near us for 150 years. Our CFA and DELWP fire fighters are quickly on the scene, are well resourced and for this we are most grateful. Also, the fuel load in our forests, after years of a drying climate, is very low even without planned burns. Those conducting planned burns have to work really hard to get the fires to start. The trunk of ironbark trees is so tough and crenelated that the low fires that do start do not take off to produce the ferocious crown fires of Gippsland, East Gippsland and the North East. So we did not feel threatened at all personally during the fire season of 2019-20.

For Victoria we would like to see better preparation to fight fires at their source and immediately they are detected. If many fires begin in National Parks and Reserves, then aerial fire fighting aircraft must be deployed quickly. We need more surveillance, command posts and fire fighting aircraft and skilled pilots to make this a reality. This would require a large investment and year round employment of skilled and experienced fire fighters. This cost would pale into insignificance if compared with the trillions of dollars of damage to towns, people and wildlife, buildings, industries and the natural resource itself that has occurred from this summer's bushfires. So, this is what we would like to see for the emergences. We thoroughly endorse the involvement of indigenous

rangers with mosaic burning, or traditional burning, to bring forests back to what they were when white people colonized the land. This, as a final goal, is unlikely or too idealistic, but still we feel that there is much to be learned from the original inhabitants.

Of course, the role of climate change is vital to consider. The CSIRO and BoM have been warning for years that the drying climate will cause the sort of unprecedented disaster we have just witnessed. The government must do even more to tackle the causes of climate change. We can transition quickly to plantation forests and clean energy, without great loss of jobs. It just takes the political will. If this is not done in a short time frame all the investment in fire fighting personelle and equipment will not save our environment from decimation, and save our cities and population from a vastly changed and hotter environment.

**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:**

**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”:**

We are aware that the OK has been given to salvage log and log the remnants of the forests that have survived untouched in East Gippsland and the Central Highlands. That this is being sanctioned under the auspices of a new RFA is unconscionable. It is a double cross too as the Labour government proudly announced it would end old growth logging immediately and all logging by 2030. At this rate nothing of great worth will be left to save by 2030. Such logging and burning as the government has sanctioned will make the forests even more fire prone. This must cease immediately, even if it means buying out the logging interests and breaking contracts to sell our precious forests to paper manufacturers for low value products.

Biodiversity teams should be funded to help the animal, bird and reptile populations recover. This would provide some stimulus to flagging regional economies during the Covid 19 provisions.

**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:**

**I would like to add the following:**

I am hopeful that this review will help politicians and bureaucrats see sense. There is no point in planning burns in areas where fire is not a real threat. Planned burns should be restricted to protecting human assets and natural assets from human actions which threaten them by causing out of control bushfires on days of extreme weather.

Without a healthy environment we can not have a healthy population.

**I would like to make the following recommendations:**

1. Install CCTV cameras at entrances to forests where pyromaniacs are known to work.
2. Plan to burn only those areas susceptible to wildfire, not those areas with little fire history.
3. Fully prepare for the coming fire seasons with aerial fire fighting teams well resourced and placed around the state.
4. Make a strong policy that fires must be detected as soon as possible, and attacked as early as possible.
5. Fund more ecologists to lead well resourced teams to help our native birds, reptiles and animals recover.
6. Make clear policy settings to transition the timber industry into plantations in the next 5 years, and transition the energy industry into renewables within the next 10 years.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Radford

South Mandurang 3551