

## **IGEM Stage 2 Submission.**

Mallacoota was LUCKY during the fires. Lucky the anticipated winds died down. Lucky that many tankers and crews had arrived, because they could get no further on closed roads. Lucky the fires occurred when businesses were fully stocked for the Christmas rush. Had it occurred nearer Australia Day we would have been without supplies quickly. Lucky we had a 'shield of water' available to protect the 4000 residents and visitors escaping to the water near the wharf, and another 2000 near the Hall.

I want to draw special attention to the ridiculous order from a distant, office bound advisor who plainly had no knowledge of East Gippland, to "Evacuate East Gippsland". Where was the designated 'Refuge Area'? Orbost? Lakes Entrance? Eden? It is a 2 Hour drive through thick bushland to Orbost and the Highway was already closed. Eden is an Hour away through thick bushland with NSW fires already threatening the road.

What would have happened if 6000 people had turned up at that Refuge, wherever it is? We were lucky that no panic accident blocked the single evacuation road from Mallacoota, blocking cars, boats, caravans and trailers and people in burning bushland- a stupid order from a distant, unknowing advisor.

And the order to evacuate Mallacoota on every Code Red or Catastrophic day, to where? for how long? how often? This is bound to destroy small isolated communities over time. Future Safety is a critical component of recovery. Few can emotionally recover in the knowledge that it could almost certainly happen again and again, and soon.

Properly stocked Refuges need to be built-in to isolated communities. Clearer parking areas, near water bodies, with 'ring of water' protections would provide safe and reasonably comfortable refuge as the fire approaches. SES or Police would need to monitor these, because selfishness is also a characteristic of our time.

For the 400 people in the Hall there were too few plastic chairs for 24 hours they were in there. Insufficient P2 masks were available. Masks and bottled water supplies, even some nourishment, are essential.

Evacuate orders are non-sensical in East Gippsland. Deep, deep firebreaks must surround communities. Clean, parkland areas supplied with hydrant access replacing the dense, uncleared bushland currently driven into the hearts of isolated villages. These parkland areas would provide increased safety to people and animal species alike.

Thinned out canopy, isolated thickets of fire-resistant native species, and regularly cleaned grounds must be the character of these areas, to reduce the likelihood and intensity of future fires approaching communities. Firewood collection, mulching and cool burns could help maintain these areas.

We must strongly oppose that green lobby, to whom the strategic loss of a few trees is the end of the world. To do what we did before, will produce the same result as before. We must respect the habitat and species these fires destroyed and promise to do better.

Looking around Mallacoota at the moment, with dead, standing scrub with dense thicket heads, and fire-ready mess laying on the ground near unburned houses, we are far from prepared for the next one. Vacant blocks still stand where family homes stood. Entire

Streetscapes are now vacant land. I can only see 4 or maybe 5 rebuilds commenced since the fires.

Recovery is still only a word in Mallacoota.

*Submission File name: IGEM Stage 2 Submission.docx*

Would you like your submission to be made publicly available?	Yes
Would you like your name (or your business or organisation's name) published with your submission?	
During the 2019-20 fire season, were you in an area where fires occurred?	Yes
Where were you impacted by fires?	Emotionally realising that without change, it can happen again and again, and potentiall worse next time unless we use proper fire control methods.
How would you describe your connection to the area?	Resident
Were you involved in responding to the fires in that area?	No
How would you best describe your involvement in responding to the fires?	
Were you (or do you continue to be) involved in supporting individuals or communities affected by the fires?	Yes
How would you best describe your involvement following the fires?	
What is the main reason for your submission?	
What is your Local Government Area (council)?	East Gippsland
What is your postcode or town?	3892
What age group are you in?	
What gender do you identify as?	
Other ways to be involved in the Inquiry	Yes
Full name	
Organisation Name	
Phone number	
Email	
What types of activities would you be interested in hearing about?	Community meetings, Follow-up submissions, Inquiry progress updates

	(please note that updates will be provided by e-mail)
Preferred method of contact	