

I am a 40 year experienced regional firefighter and professionally trained forester. I have engaged in fire prevention and suppression programs across temperate and tropical Australia. I have no political or government links that influence the ten points below:

- 1 These comments only relate to the second Term of Reference [and not the first- effectiveness of Relief support or third- the EMV and BRV interface]
- 2 BRV appears an ineffective enhancement to the regional prevention and suppression of wildfire in regional Victoria. As the organization is dislocated with regional volunteers ineffective and increasingly bureaucratic programs will prevail. BRV seems more a near term political policy than an effective improvement to regional fire suppression
- 3 Urban firefighters in Victoria have little prevention skills nor regional community interface. Their suppression skills are not based on broad area wildfires viz dry firefighting.
- 4 BRV will remove the paid workforce from close working and interpersonal relationships critical for hazardous and complex wildfire control. In regional areas this will lead to large fires with greater losses.
- 5 Any move to increase localized resources to more concentrated resources such as aerial appliances will increase losses. The use of large aircraft and helicopters from a few operating centres is unlikely to keep small fires small. The use of BRV to coordinate such appliances will further add to the time to apply- and hugely increase operating budgets- without any obvious improvement in effectiveness. That is, aerial appliances require huge budget and are yet to stop a single fire in Victoria!. Such resourcing needs a review compared with improved localized support.
- 6 BRV legislation is inadequate for effective fire prevention programs on private lands. The public lands prevention works are inadequate in their planning and deployment due to an overly bureaucratic approach by DELP and NP Service [Vic]. This does not appear to be modified by this report.
- 7 Climate Change is a real and present agent of increased fire risk. Victoria is risking dramatic increases in operating costs [insurance, real losses] for regional land based enterprises. BRV appears to have increased these risks not lowered them.
- 8 The BRV organization needs careful interface with the changing Federal organizations. This appears to be leading to lower localized autonomy for volunteer organizations such as the members of the CFA.
- 9 BRV is unlikely to boost volunteer participation and thereby paid participation is likely to be a direct consequence of BRV. This maybe an internal objective of the management of BRV.

10 The Independent Inquiry has the opportunity to observe the BRV model and its likely negative influence on practical fire prevention and suppression. Localized volunteer groups were critical in the control of small and large campaign fires of 2019/20. This key to effective control is far from the current organizational construct of BRV.

Sincerely
Simon Penfold

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?	Yes
During the 2019-20 fire season, were you in an area where fires occurred?	Yes
Where were you impacted by fires?	Yes
How would you describe your connection to the area?	Resident
Were you involved in responding to the fires in that area?	Yes
How would you best describe your involvement in responding to the fires?	I stayed to defend my property or properties in the area
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?	I am a member of the community and am involved in community relief and/or recovery
What is the main reason for your submission?	
What is your Local Government Area (council)?	Rural City of Wangaratta
What is your postcode or town?	3677
What age group are you in?	55-64
What gender do you identify as?	Male
How did you hear about this inquiry?	Advertisement in the newspaper
Other ways to be involved in the Inquiry	Yes
Full name	Simon Penfold

Organisation	Landari
Phone number	
Email	
What types of activities would you be interested in hearing about?	Follow-up submissions
Preferred method of contact	