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**Submission Number: NND.001.00133**

**Submission Of: Warren Sharpe OAM for Eurobodalla Shire Council**

### Your Details

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What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise? Emergency/Disaster response and/or management

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? Eurobodalla Shire Council

### Your Submission

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

Refer attached documents agreed to be provided following participating in the visit of the Royal Commission to Batemans Bay with Eurobodalla Shire Council Mayor Liz Innes and Director Infrastructure Services/Local Emergency Management Officer Warren Sharpe OAM.

We wish to thank the many agencies, volunteers and media, both local and visiting, involved in the response who helped our Eurobodalla community through this extremely challenging time. Their efforts were above and beyond all reasonable expectations in the face of this firestorm and duration campaign. We are indeed lucky to have such dedicated people and are indebted to all involved.

We also particularly recognise Mayor Liz Innes and local State Member for Bega Andrew Constance MP for their tireless support and 24/7 availability during the duration of the fires. We also appreciate the interest shown by our local Federal Member Fiona Phillips MP during this time.

We are also grateful for the assistance provided by the Prime Minister in making the Australian Defence Force available to carry out urgent tasks to assist our community in our time of need.

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

Refer to the attached documents.

The Eurobodalla EOC arrangements are 'make-shift' and well below the required standards. We commend all involved in the EOC who made this work so well in a difficult, often smokey, setting.

Resilience of telecommunications was particularly poor. The information flow about extent of impact due to the loss of infrastructure was also a significant gap.

See attachments for further challenges.

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

Refer to the attached documents.

The NSW and Australian Governments need to make arrangements to:

- i) fund, design, build and operate the Eurobodalla integrated emergency services precinct already agreed by agencies in Moruya (refer work undertaken by Lt Gen Ken Gillespie AC, DSC, CSM for the NSW Premier 2018)
- ii) consider impacts more holistically and immediately from the perspective of the individual or business, rather than from established agencies perspective. This includes making one agency responsible for the whole of an issue rather than just referrals (eg for housing need to ensure all owners who have lost houses are contacted and outcomes tracked to ensure there are no gaps, perhaps working with the Insurance Council of Australia)
- iii) respond more speedily without means testing, to immediate financial needs. For example, a business package should have been provided to all businesses within the fire affected area, based on registered businesses, immediately following New Years Eve to keep businesses afloat. The requirement to then implement means tested programs could then be rolled out subsequently through a case management model.
- iv) develop more tailored and immediate assistance programs, particularly for those in the agricultural sector. Such programs should recognise the different levels of impact (eg a farmer who has lost his home as well as incurred major property damage, need for greater support in key areas such as fodder)
- v) develop solutions ahead of time that recognise the specific needs (eg provide Federal Government funding for temporary accommodation on farm rather than remote from farm, so farmers can care for animals, rebuild - many live a long way from towns)
- vi) ensure adequate deployment of mental health services as early as practicable to the field
- vi) determine mechanisms to more immediately share information across agencies and with Recovery Committees for that purpose
- vii) undertake a body of work as to how the ADF can assist during the response and recovery phases with known capability shared and integrated with emergency combat and emergency operations teams
- viii) provide the ADF personnel on the ground greater delegation to act to maximise effectiveness
- ix) review ADF equipment based on the experience from this event (eg dozer with a tree pusher more flexible)
- x) consider the impact Federal biodiversity legislation is impacting on State and Local Government jurisdictions, and on the efforts of individuals trying to provide a safe living environment with a lower bushfire risk

**Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?**

The current COVID-19 challenges are huge. We hope those communities such as Eurobodalla who have now been impacted by drought, then fire, then flood and now COVID-19 in rapid succession, are recognised for the additional impact with on-going assistance required to effect a full recovery in these very challenging times.

**Do you agree to your submission being published?** Yes I agree to my submission being published in my name

**Supporting material provided:**

Attachment NSW Government Inquiry 2019 160320.docx

Rob Pollock motion.docx

Minutes - Bushfire motion.docx