



Driving change: evidence informed policy and strategy

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# Royal Commissions in Australia: expectations & impact

## Royal Commissions are entrenched feature of Australian public life

### *Expectations loom large:*

- qualities of independence, neutrality, and transparency, as well as delivery of a reasoned report, make them attractive tools to government

### *Potential for considerable impact:*

- can extend far beyond specific investigations & remit, with changes to public policy & government administration

### *In the balance:*

- cost, efficiency, timeliness, commitment, capacity for recommendations to be implemented

## Reasons why Government may establish a Royal Commission

### *Urgency:*

- Government confronted with an issue or problem where *immediate* action is 'necessary'

### *Fills a gap:*

- Government agencies lack expertise, coercive powers, or public confidence, to handle an issue or investigation

### *Big & tricky:*

- to explore a very complex matter in manner beyond scope of administrative resources

### *Messy & ugly:*

- to investigate allegations of impropriety where government, or individual working in government, involved

## Instrument of Executive power – type of "public executive inquiry"

### *Special features*

- Traces back to the *Domesday Book*
- Ad hoc and temporary
- Non-judicial and non-administrative governmental investigation

### *Exercise of the prerogative:*

- established by Letters Patent issued by Governor-General acting with advice of Executive Council
- potential for complementary Letters Patent by State Governors

### *Compulsory powers:* sourced in legislation

- Notices to produce documents, statements of information attend as witnesses and be examined on oath/affirmation

# Why experts should assist Royal Commissions

## Potential to influence outcomes and effect change

Change behaviour of a policy actor through altered cognition and understanding

Change organisational routines that improve collective activities and/or institutional memory

Change pre-existing systems and policies

Change assumptions, values, and norms behind policies

New or revised policy instruments, through multiple inquiry actors engaging in constructive reflections and deliberations

Policy redesign and reconstruction, associated with changes in key causal beliefs within policy domain

Change communication strategies by policy advocates to facilitate greater levels of political feasibility

# Examples of experts in action

2007 Pitt Review into the UK Summer Floods	2011 New Zealand Canterbury Earthquakes Commission	2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientific and Engineering Panel comprised of engineers, hydrologists and geographers</li><li>• Panel charged to deliver expertise and provide a 'challenge function' to ideas, research and conclusions of review</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two Commissioners had engineering expertise (one with business background, one academic)</li><li>• Publication of peer reviewed process of technical reports to generate public debate</li><li>• 'Hot tub' expert panel hearings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commission staff included a policy-oriented research team</li><li>• 53 Research Reports</li><li>• Public Discussion Paper</li><li>• Information Paper</li><li>• Expert panels on planned burning and planning and development issues</li></ul>



# The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report

## Conclusions informed and driven by the scientific evidence

- Australia's disaster outlook is *'alarming'* and requires a *'fundamental shift in strategic thinking about national natural disaster risk management'*.
- Clearly signalled urgent need to improve disaster management capacity, resilience & adaptation in Australia as natural hazard events become more frequent & severe under climate change.

## Expert reactions

- *"Overall, this seems a realistic report that incorporates a diverse and complex body of evidence"* - Professor Bowman, Professor of Pyrogeography & Fire Science, University of Tasmania
- *"It's an extraordinary read ... they go across an extraordinary breadth."* - Dr Annagretta Hunter, Australian National University

Royal Commission hearings commenced with live presentations by scientific experts so as to frame issues and inform Commission



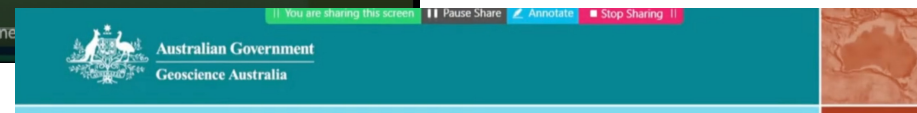
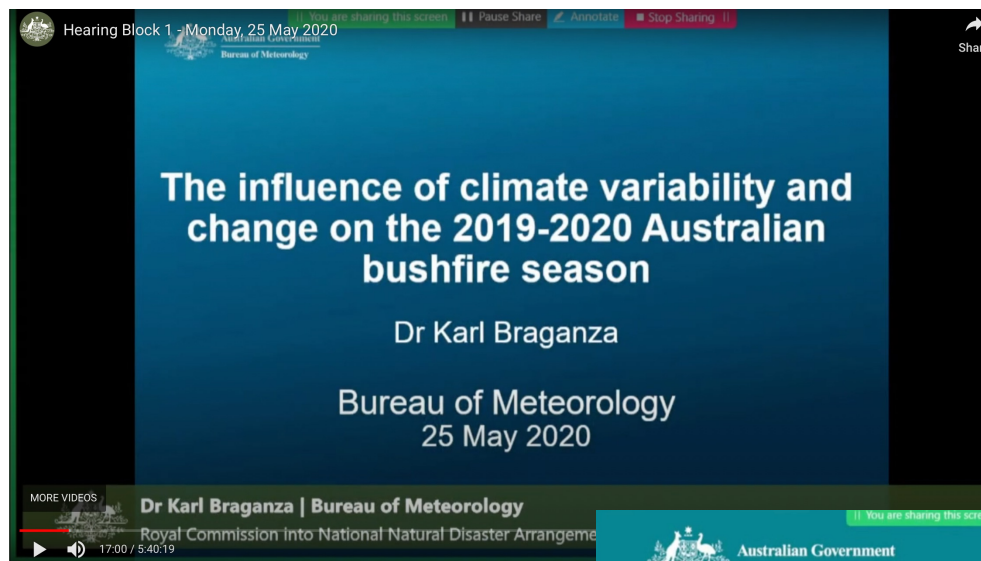
### HEARING BLOCK 1 - CANBERRA

Monday 25 May 2020  
Canberra, ACT

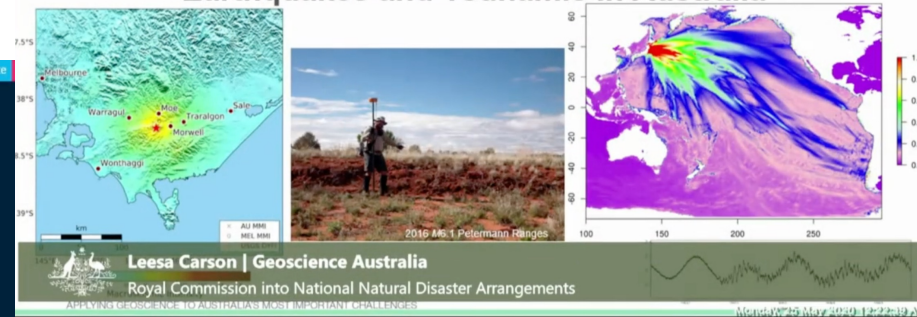
#### Witness List and Expected Order of Witnesses

The Royal Commission expects that evidence will be heard from the witnesses listed below. Please note that the list and order of witnesses is indicative only and subject to change.

No	Witness	Details	Scheduled date of appearance
<b>Hearing commences 10:00am</b>			
1.	Dr Karl Braganza	Bureau of Meteorology	25 May 2020
2.	Dr Helen Cleugh, Dr Michael Grose	CSIRO	25 May 2020
3.	Leesa Carson	Geoscience Australia	25 May 2020
<b>Lunch 1:00pm</b>			
4.	Sharanjit Paddam	Actuaries Institute of Australia	25 May 2020
5.	Mark Leplastrier	Insurance Australia Group	25 May 2020
6.	Dr Ryan Crompton	Risk Frontiers	25 May 2020
7.	Professor Sue Townsend	Direct Experience	25 May 2020



#### Observations and Geohazard Modelling in Respect to Earthquakes and Tsunamis in Australia



Leesa Carson | Geoscience Australia  
Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements



# Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements: a national inquiry during a national emergency

## Methodology:

- 10 weeks of public hearings
- 301 witness appearances
- 3,079 exhibits tendered
- 1,772 public submissions
- 16 community forums
- 6 expert consultation forums
- 5 Background Papers
- 4 Issues Papers
- Notices to produce documents & Statements of Information
- Interim Observations
- Draft recommendations
- Final submissions

## Recalibrated plans due to onset of COVID-19 pandemic:

- Hearings held not in person but 'virtual', livestreamed
- 301 witness appearances (some more than once) by video-link, often using panel format
- Community witnesses pre-recorded to reduce risk of trauma, minimise logistics
- 38 witness appearances from Australian Government
- 107 witness appearances from state and territory governments
- 22 witness appearances from local governments
- 134 witness appearances from broader community and experts



*Panel of NSW's Emergency Leaders*



*Examining Australia's Chief Scientist*

# 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Submissions by individuals	Submissions by professionals	Submissions by organisations
<p>626 of 1,339 submissions from individuals (47%) reported being affected by the 2019-2020 bushfire season and some affected in multiple ways.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•580 (43%) reported living in a bushfire affected area</li> <li>•287 (21%) reported that they had evacuated</li> <li>•86 (6%) reported being involved in firefighting efforts</li> <li>•53 (4%) reported that they had volunteered in non-firefighting response roles</li> <li>•316 (29%) reported suffering a personal or financial loss; and</li> <li>•53 (4%) reported that they had volunteered in support of recovery efforts.</li> </ul>	<p>460 of 1,339 (34%) reported having professional knowledge or expertise relevant to natural disaster arrangements.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 135 reported being current or former firefighters</li> <li>• further 325 reported having expertise in fields relevant to the Commission's terms of reference.</li> <li>• Individuals identified having expertise in: emergency/disaster response and/or management, community welfare, environment/land management, wildlife conservation, traditional land and fire management practices of Indigenous Australians, and impacts of changes in climatic conditions, land use, planning, building standards.</li> </ul>	<p>433 from organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 from professional and volunteer fire brigades, associations, unions and collectives.</li> <li>• 408 from government, non-government, private sector, peak body, community groups and associations with expertise in a range of fields relevant to the work of the Commission, including: environment, land management, forestry, fire ecology, land planning, traditional land management, climate, natural hazard modelling, emergency services, disaster response and management, telecommunications, health, community welfare, wildlife conservation, resilience, building standards, aviation</li> </ul>

Source: [naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions/summary-submissions](https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/submissions/summary-submissions)

See also: Consolidated List of Submissions [naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/consolidated-list-published-submissions](https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/consolidated-list-published-submissions)

Official Document Library (exhibits, statements, transcripts, witness lists: [naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/document-library](https://naturaldisaster.royalcommission.gov.au/document-library)



# How experts can assist Royal Commissions

Make a written submission through public portal (eg providing or identifying existing research or opportunities for research during life of inquiry)

Participate in community forum and visits by Commissioners

Propose & participate in expert consultation forum, shape understanding of terms of reference

Contribute to and respond to Background Papers and Issues Papers

Respond to compulsory notices to produce documents & Statements of Information

Appear as a witness in public hearings, including on panels and in expert 'hot tubs'

Make submissions in response to Interim Reports

Make final submissions in response to Counsel Assisting's final submissions and/or draft recommendations

Promote and support the Final Report recommendations for adoption

Track and critique the implementation of any recommendations adopted