

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Additional Estimates – 3 March 2020

Opening Statement

On 20 February 2020, the Governor-General issued the Letters Patent establishing the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The Prime Minister announced the Commission's establishment later that day.

Since establishment just under two weeks ago we have launched our website, invited submissions, and released dates and locations for public engagement in a number of fire-affected communities across Australia. The first of those community forums are taking place this week, in Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island.

The Commissioners will be meeting with small groups representative of the broader community as well as personnel involved in disaster response at the state and community level.

These discussions will be informal, and provide participants an opportunity to share views and experiences regarding bushfire preparedness, response, resilience and recovery. Members of the community wishing to attend a community forum can register their interest on the Commission's website.

A schedule for public hearings is being developed and we hope to release that soon.

The Royal Commission recognises that a number of other inquiries are currently underway in States affected by the extreme 2019-20 bushfire season and intends to work with those inquiries to avoid duplication and consider how broader preparedness, resilience and recovery can be enhanced.

The Commission is committed to ensuring our processes and engagement with the public are trauma-informed and recognises the need for support to engage with us. The nature and content of the inquiry being conducted by the Commission may be distressing for some people. Short term counselling, information and support services will be available to people contacting the Commission.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.