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9 January 2020

To the Standing Committee on the Environment & Energy  
House of Representatives  
Canberra (by email).

Dear Members

There is a very disturbing report in today's national newspaper that the area of public land in Victoria recommended by the Black Saturday Royal Commission to be back-burned each year (385,000 ha), was under-achieved in 2018/19 by 255,000 ha. (34%).

Even after allowing for unforeseen circumstances, to achieve actual back-burning of 30% of the Commission's recommendation is contemptuous of it, is delinquent administration & is very likely to make the State of Victoria culpable for lives lost & property damaged in this summer's fires if litigants can show that their losses are a direct consequence of the underachieved recommendation.

I submit it is vital when the Committee specifically considers whether current legislation & regulation is in conflict or causes confusion for landholders and takes regard of legislative capability at local, state & federal levels requiring landholders to reduce fire risks on their properties, that its resultant recommendation(s) to the Australian Parliament include that it legislate to make it compulsory for all authorities under its jurisdiction plus all authorities under the jurisdictions of States & Territories plus all Australian local body authorities to greatly & regularly reduce fuel loads in forested areas under the control of those authorities.

If, in the Committee's terms of reference "landholders" means private individuals only, the Committee should seek approval to have the terms amended so that they encompass private landholders & all of the authorities mentioned above.

For your consideration please.

Yours faithfully

Paul Nolan