



MAKING A SUBMISSION GUIDE

This guide provides information about how to prepare a written submission for the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Who can make a submission?

Any person or organisation can make a submission to the Commission. Individuals, community groups, private organisations, representatives of government departments/agencies and anyone else with relevant information to the Commission's Terms of Reference can make a submission.

What information can my submission contain?

Your submission must be relevant to at least one of the Commission's Terms of Reference. Therefore, before preparing your submission, it is important that you read the Terms of Reference (available at www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au) or request a copy by calling 1800 243 650.

Your submission can contain factual information, opinion or both. You may wish to draw the attention of the Commission to something relevant to the Terms of Reference. You could choose to emphasise solutions to the matter or raise issues. All submissions are welcomed provided they are relevant, address the Terms of Reference and are not frivolous, defamatory or offensive in nature.

Reason for making a submission

You may have one or more reasons for choosing to make a submission to the Commission. These could include:

- A member of your family was or you were injured as a result of the bushfires
- A member of your family died as a result of the bushfires
- You or your organisation is part of a community that suffered loss or damage in the bushfires
- You or your organisation has an interest in a property that was damaged or destroyed as a result of the bushfires
- You or your organisation has information and/or evidence relating to the causes, circumstances or prevention of the bushfires
- You or your organisation may also have experience with previous bushfires or have other relevant experience.

What to focus on

The focus of your submission will depend on the reason you have chosen to make a submission. For example, if you or a family member experienced the bushfires, you might wish to provide us with details about your experience, including what you saw and heard on the days leading up to the fire, the fire itself and the days following the fires.

Alternatively, if you or your organisation have an interest in a particular community that was affected by the fires, you may wish to tell us about the impact of the fires on that community as understood by you or your organisation.

You might wish to tell us your observations and make recommendations about what worked well, what didn't work well and what could be done better, or you might wish to make other comments you feel would be helpful to the work of the Commission.

Areas that you might wish to comment on include:

- The causes and circumstances of the fires
- Warnings and communication
- The Stay or Go policy, including whether you chose to stay and defend or to leave, and why
- Fire preparation, including preparing and defending homes and clearing vegetation on private land
- Emergency management of the fires which may include comments on both CFA and Department of Sustainability and Environment resources
- Fire detection
- Planning, including regulations and standards and bunkers
- Fuel reduction, including vegetation management on public land
- Building regulations and standards
- Emergency responses, including 000 calls, ambulance, police, CFA
- Essential services during and after the fires, including power, water, phone coverage
- Roads, including road blocks and inaccessibility of roads during and after fires
- Cost of fires, including loss of life, property, livelihood, livestock and fencing
- Insurance
- Recovery effort, including coordination and relief centres.

Is there a specific submission format?

There is no specific format or method for organising or presenting a submission. Your contribution can take the form of a letter, a short summary paper or a longer research document. You could include relevant data in appendices or incorporate them in the body of the text. You could include photographs, audiovisual material and other supporting documentation like maps or copies of correspondence.

It is important that the structure, argument and conclusions of your submission are clear. In addition, there are certain technical conventions that the Commission asks you to observe:

- **Cover sheet**
All submissions must be accompanied by a cover sheet. If you are lodging a submission electronically via the Commission's website you will automatically be required to complete a cover sheet. If you are submitting via post we ask that you download the printable version of the cover sheet, complete the details and post it to the Commission.

If you have previously provided a submission without a cover sheet we ask that you complete the printable version and post it to the Commission along with details of your original submission and the date it was submitted.

- **Hard copy or electronic submissions**

You can send your submission in hard copy or electronically. Handwritten submissions are acceptable but please ensure your handwriting is legible.

Electronic submissions should be lodged via the online submissions page at www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au where you can attach your submission in electronic format (e.g. Microsoft Word files, or PDF etc).

Material such as a video or photographs can also be submitted electronically via the website (where file size does not exceed 5 megabytes) or via post.

If submitting electronically, you can upload a maximum of five documents. However, the combined total file size still must not exceed 5 megabytes. If the total file size does exceed 5 megabytes then please post a CD of your submission.

If you are lodging a postal submission there is no limit on file size. Supplementary material that illustrates the points you make in your submission may be submitted on CD, DVD or in printed format. Please do not send original copies.

If you have any questions about the suitability of your file format/size, please contact the Commission on 1800 243 650.

- **Language of submissions**

Most submissions will be made public by the Commission on the Commission's website. Submissions should be relevant, not contain offensive language or remarks or be defamatory, and not be frivolous or vexatious. The Commission may choose not to publish a submission if it believes it breaches any of these guidelines.

Lodging your submission

To lodge your submission electronically:

1. Visit www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au
2. Click on 'Submissions'
3. Scroll down to 'Electronic Submissions'
4. Click on 'Make a Submission form'
5. Complete your contact details and other basic information about your submission
6. Upload your written submission and any other supporting electronic files
7. Click 'SUBMIT'.

To lodge your submission via post:

1. Download and complete the 'coversheet' from the 'Submissions' page on the website
2. Send your submission with the completed coversheet to:
Submissions
2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission
GPO Box 4358
Melbourne VIC 3001

If you wish your submission to be considered as part of the Commission's Interim Report please submit by 4pm on Monday, 18 May 2009. Submissions received after that date will be considered as part of the Final Report which is expected to be delivered in July 2010.

What will happen to my submission?

All submissions will be treated as public documents unless determined otherwise by the Commission. This means that in all but exceptional cases submissions will be published on the Commission's website. They may also be published, quoted or summarised by the Commission in its reports or publications.

Unless you have requested that the submission remain confidential (see below), it will normally be published after the Commission has received and examined it and authorised its publication.

Confidentiality

If you wish your submission to be treated as confidential you should indicate this in your cover sheet or on the online form, as well as in the body of your submission.

The Commission will consider all requests for confidentiality. Should the Commission consider the request for confidentiality not to be appropriate you will be provided with an opportunity to withdraw your submission or re-submit it in a form suitable for publication.

A submission that is accepted as confidential will not be published. However, the author of a confidential submission may be requested to produce documents or attend a hearing to give evidence. You may be permitted to provide your evidence in private. If you are concerned about confidentiality you may wish to seek independent legal advice on this issue prior to making a submission.

Public hearings

Under certain circumstances the Commission might wish to discuss a matter further with the author of a submission. If this occurs the Commission will contact you to discuss your appearance at a public hearing.