



**Australian Government**  
**Attorney-General's Department**

MC14/23907

22 December 2014

Ms Belinda Clarkson  
4 Felicia Rise  
DIAMOND CREEK VIC 3089

Dear Ms Clarkson

Thank you for your letter of 9 November 2014 to the Prime Minister regarding extreme bushfire warnings. This was referred to the Minister for Justice who has portfolio responsibility for national emergency management. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

Under Australia's constitutional arrangements, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for emergency management and for the protection of life and property. This includes the management of bushfires and public warnings, using the best science and modelling information available.

The Australian Government works in collaboration with states and territories to build disaster resilience and make Australia a safer place to live. Since the Victorian Bushfires in 2009, a significant amount of national work has been undertaken to enhancing bushfire systems, community education and public warnings. In particular, the Australian Government has contributed:

- \$59.5 million towards Emergency Alert, a telephone-based emergency warning system for state and territory emergency services to send warning messages to landlines and mobile phones
- \$15 million towards the National Bushfire Mitigation Programme to assist states and territories in implementing long term bushfire mitigation strategies and improved fuel reduction activities
- \$15 million towards the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre to undertake a three year research program of tasks arising from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires
- \$48 million towards the new Bushfire Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre to undertake research streams dedicated to fire risk and a range of projects on risk communication, and
- \$ 234,000 towards a National Review of Warnings and Information to share knowledge and determine good practice in provision of warnings and information to communities during emergencies.



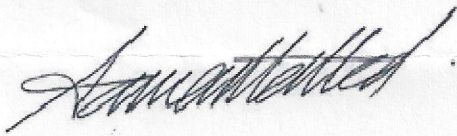
The Australian Government is also working with states and territories to scope and implement significant improvements to current national fire danger rating systems, and to strengthen the ability of fire authorities to accurately communicate bushfire risk to the community.

This year, the Australian Government also commissioned a Productivity Inquiry into natural disaster funding. This is the first comprehensive review of natural disaster funding arrangements in more than a decade, and provides an opportunity for reforms to emergency management and better protection of our communities. The Government is carefully considering the Productivity Commission's final findings and recommendations.

Thank you for writing on this matter. I trust the above information is useful.

The action officer for this matter is Wendy Kelly who can be contacted on 02 6141 2906.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samantha Chard', written in a cursive style.

Samantha Chard  
Assistant Secretary  
National Security Resilience Policy Division

Telephone: (02) 6141 2970  
Email: <samantha.chard@ag.gov.au>