

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO
POOR LEVELS OF AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM
BUSHFIRES AND DROUGHT**

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

The first wave of smoke hit Victoria after it came in from NSW. It was shocking, frightening, and physically and mentally challenging. Despite having national standards for air quality, the negligence of climate action has seen the beginning of the worst impacts we expect to face. PM2.5 can be lethal even for the healthiest people. I am an asthmatic. This summer was traumatic. I could hardly leave my home and I struggled to breathe outside, even with a high-quality PM2.5 mask. I had to spend over \$700 on an air purifier that took 6 weeks to arrive.

Knowing the seriousness of high PM2.5 levels and hearing nothing from our leaders about it had such a bad impact on my mental health that I was suicidal. I was making plans and preparing goodbye letters.

A lack of government action on or mention of smoke inhalation both state-based and federally has been appalling and seen many of my friends and family members suffer because they didn't know enough. This was a national health crisis and I saw such basic and minimal coverage of the situation and heard almost nothing from my leaders. Not only was the prevention of this problem completely overlooked but the silence from the governments about the seriousness of the situation once it was happening was absolutely deplorable. People died and we heard close to nothing from any politicians about their plan to compensate members of the public who suffered, prevention of this next summer or how they plan to educate the public about PM2.5 and what it can do to their body, regardless of health status.