

**Submission
No 2**

INQUIRY INTO WAMBELONG FIRE

Name: Stephen and Louise Knight

Date received: 18/12/2013

INQUIRY INTO THE WAMBELONG FIRE
SUBMISSION BY STEPHEN AND LOUISE KNIGHT
“TANNABAH”

On Sunday, 13th January 2013, the fire came out of the Warrumbungle National Park through a neighbour's property and then onto our property, killing approximately 250 wethers and devastating a portion of our property.

Our family fought the fire for the next 7 days on “Tannabah”, with the help of the RFS and local friends.

“Tannabah” has two homesteads, two cottages and two woolsheds and all were seriously threatened on Friday, 18th January 2013, but were saved with the majority of our sheep and cattle. We are hugely indebted to our friends, RFS and the earthmoving contractors who worked so hard for the week. We are uncomfortable to owe so many people so much.

Immediately, after the fire, friends and relatives, local and not so local, arrived and started to help rebuild our fences. This was fortunate as our place was so devastated it would have been hard to know where to start rebuilding by ourselves. Having people here motivated us to start rebuilding as we hadn't realised the enormity of the task in front of us. Our country that was so badly affected is very steep and rocky; this is also where our boundary fences are. We lost approximately 15 km of fencing, mostly with barely accessible access. All of these fences had been maintained and were stock proof before the fire. Due to the tough terrain, we could not access physical help from Blazeaid, but we were very grateful for donations of fencing materials from Blazeaid and other local committees. Due to various reasons, none of our neighbours were in a position to help rebuild the boundary fences. If we had known what we had to do at the start of the rebuilding process, we could have been excused for not

attempting such a huge task. Thankfully, the people who came and helped prevented us from being over-whelmed. We are a family business, well established as the Knight family has held “Tannabah” since 1852. If one part of the family had been over-whelmed and walked away after the fire, the business would have collapsed. We are very fortunate we have stayed together and survived this crisis, but we feel the protocol of the NPWS has caused us a great deal of unnecessary despair. This despair is ongoing due to poisoning of our stock due to the huge growth of Darling Pea on our badly burnt country. This disaster was unnecessary and should not happen to anyone again. We feel the NPWS have too much country and they do not look after it well enough to prevent these fires from occurring.

We have attached photos to our submission. We have included a brief explanation on each photo.



Fire on "Tannabah" property, Sunday 13 January 2013.



Fire on "Tannabah" property Sunday 13 January 2013, getting ready and waiting for help to arrive.



Saving "Tannabah" woolshed Friday, 18 January 2013



Photo taken from "Tannabah" garden on Friday, 18 January 2013



Photo taken Saturday, 19 January 2013. The cattle are alive but nothing to eat. We sent a number of truckloads to Armidale on agistment.



Rebuilding “Tannabah” boundary fence. You can see two men working in dangerous conditions due to damaged trees. The boundary fences needed to be rebuilt quickly to keep our stock contained.



Another devastated boundary fence line on “Tannabah”. Our neighbour lost everything so was in no condition to help rebuild this fence.