

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 14e**

## **INQUIRY INTO WAMBELONG FIRE**

**Organisation:** Warrumbungle Fire Action Group

**Date received:** 30/01/2014

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## General Purpose Standing Committee Enquiry No 5

I am a landowner in the Warrumbungle region and as such was involved with some of the RFS landowner fire fighters. My husband and son fought in two different Brigades in the fire. It was evident in the early stages that there were many concerns relevant to the management of the fire.

Although I was not actively involved in fighting the Wambelong Fire, I realized what a huge community concern it had become and decided to document the events for two reasons:

- 1 To use my Psychotherapy training to support and hopefully unburden some of the Captains of Brigades and their wives, by helping them to talk about their experiences and thereby have a true and honest account of their situations and
- 2 To make known to those in authority the many problems encountered during the fires.

In some ways I became a medium for the issues of the seven Captains I approached. They were exhausted, traumatized and incapable of putting together a movement for change. As other like- minded people came on board, we gradually created a small group and have been able, through the assistance of the Shooters and Fishers Party, to achieve an Enquiry into this catastrophic event.

To follow, under the headings of Management, Prevention, Chain of Command, Local Response and Communication, I have collated evidence that will, I hope, define and clarify our brief which is to aim for change in procedure and best practice in fire management.

The following seven transcripts, for which I have permission from each individual to send as submissions, are attached, together with the submission that I have coordinated and written on behalf of our Warrumbungle Fire Action Group.

I am happy to appear before the Enquiry.

Carolyn Lyons OAM  
"Parmedman"  
GULARGAMBONE NSW 2828

Carolyn: It's the 20<sup>th</sup> February we are here with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ we are going to talk about the fires to get their experience and opinions about what could be done better. So \_\_\_ can I start with you how long have you lived in this neck of the woods.

Male: All my life 55 years

Carolyn: So you would have had experience with other fires?

Male: Yes, nothing of the magnitude of this one.

Carolyn: How did you fare with the Warrumbungle fires?

Male: We fared all right - it was practally fifteen kilometres from us.

Carolyn: So that top country was not burnt - it was all ploughed up.

Male: It did not affect us personally.

Carolyn: Are you two happy to answer some of the questions that have previously been emailed to you?

Female & Male: Yes we are.

Carolyn: **What do you think or hope what will happen to the evidence we are collecting with these audios.**

**Male: I am hoping it will land up in the right authorities and act on a plan. Hopefully something will come out of it so it never happens again.**

Carolyn: and \_\_\_

Female: Well it's for our children as well; they're not used to these fires and they need to have a direction to keep them safe.

Carolyn: **So do you think collating the evidence first hand, as we are, will be beneficial to changing some of the problems.**

**Male: I hope so**

**Female: We hope so.**

Carolyn: Have you got any friends that you know might be suffering as a result of this fire? Anyone? There are lots of people out there who are exhausted and angry, but I think it goes deeper than that. What do you believe?

**Male: I think there are some people there that are really hurting but they're too proud to go and get help. I know a couple of friends. Mainly tortured and scared and they're just too proud - they won't go and get help.**

Female: It's not only the me, it's the women who have to support those men.

Carolyn: So you would know a few of these women who really found it difficult?

Female: Well I think so; they have not actually disclosed anything; I can feel for them; just little things they say tell they are suffering with the husband because he is suffering. They don't go and access the help. They don't believe there is a problem, possibly don't know, or it's the stigma attached to mental health label. They need counselling, they need help, but they possibly don't see that they are mentally disturbed.

Carolyn: Yes, I have seen a lot of that.  
A couple of things have come to the fore; one is mobile phone access. I see you don't have any access here and I have come six ks ten ks.

Male: Twelve ks

Carolyn: I have come twelve ks and no mobile access on the road. So could you tell me again about your mobile phone access?

Male: Mobile phone access? It is non existent. We are sitting in our kitchen now at the moment and we have got no service. You can go outside and put one foot up and one foot down and face mecca and you might get one bar but no mobile service.

Carolyn: And you can see the tower?

Male: You can see the tower at night time, yeah.

Female: Some weather conditions we can get a little, but it's not reliable and we don't rely on it.

Carolyn: And it's the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

Male: So they tell us.

Carolyn: We were told that woody weeds have become a big problem. That's what they found in the Warrumbungles, because in the early years, in the fifties, there were a lot of sheep and they ate things down and things were kept under control. However now with the Greens' influence, they have allowed woody weeds to come in. So the Warrumbungles are full of woody weeds and pine trees. Is that right?

Female: Well yes. I drive through the park quite often and it's not only those two things. You're not allowed to use the wood in the park. The campers have to take their own in; they buy it at either end of the park before they go into the National Park, so there are no twigs, sticks, logs ever chopped up any more. They are all to be left for the lizards and smaller animals, which I appreciate

are important, but there - it's created a huge fuel load which has obviously happened which has built up and then this fire.....

Carolyn: Now those animals are all dead.

Female: Yeah, that's right! So who and what are we trying to save? It just amazed me the amount of logs and trees – they would fall over and they were never allowed to be used.

Male: Talk about noxious weeds up there. We have got two creeks that run through this property, both catchment areas for the National Park and the weed infestation we get in our creek country costs us between thirty and forty thousand dollars per year to control. Up there it just runs rampant. When we turned up there the Saturday, the day the fire started, we all said we should have a bit of Ester in our tanks and we could start and put out a few noxious weeds while we are fighting the fire - just as a joke. You go up there now, after this rain that is all that has come back- this blue heliotrope. It's going to take over this country - once it gets a leg in -it takes every thing out.

Carolyn: The purpose of the National Parks, as far as you are aware, is what?

Male: When somebody finds out, can they let me know? I haven't got a clue.

Carolyn: Right! Well, as far as I am aware, the purpose of a National Park is to maintain the park because it is a national heritage. It is for the pleasure of people- as long as they pay - and it is for the pleasure of animals, to be free. But it is also a responsibility for those paid people, to maintain, to create hazard reduction enterprises and to care for it. If you say blue heliotrope is going to take over the park, then the animals are not going to survive any way.

Male: And the kangaroo's and the emus are just not going to be there, it's just a shame. When I was talking to \_\_\_\_\_ the other day, he could not believe that the blue heliotrope was that bad up there now. It just went rampant after that rain and it's just wall to wall.

Carolyn: So that requires the chemical Ester?

Male: No you can't kill it with Ester. You need Gaylon 600 .It's not one of the cheapest chemicals on the market and you have got to brew it up at a fairly strong rate and you have to spot spray it and wet the plant. You're only getting sixty percent kill rate, so you have to do it every year .At certain times of the year when it's low, it will kill stock. There is toxin in it and if there's not enough for the stock to eat- if they eat it at a certain time, they die.

Carolyn: That would flow through from the National Park perimeters onto the landholders land.

Male: Oh yeah for sure. We have, talking in the old language, we have got fifteen hundred acres of creek county where we'd probably run cattle on, but if

it isn't getting controlled up stream, we may as well build a fire and put forty thousand dollars worth of notes on it and watch it go up \_\_\_\_\_.

Carolyn: **So it is costing the landowner thirty to forty thousand dollars.**

Male: Costing us

Carolyn: Yes to maintain their properties because of the lack of maintenance by the National Park.

Male: Yeah \_\_\_\_\_

Carolyn: You were telling me a story about the cost have you heard - the overall cost of the fire.

Male: It was on the ABC Radio as a matter of fact and they said up to thirty five million dollars, which seemed a lot of money to me.

Female: We were also told about the airport.

Male: I was also told the story that at the Coonabarabran Airport on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the fires- that was the third, fourth and fifth day of the fire, they spent over four million dollars at the Coonabarabran Airport -which I thought was unbelievable. Re fuelling and the gel for the planes and \_\_\_\_\_

Carolyn: Is that the retardant?

Male: Yeah, it just comes to National Parkes or Bush fires and private enterprise just puts a price on it, and they pay it. It's just unreal.

Carolyn: There was an incident when the Prime Minister's plane landed in Coonabarabran?

Male: Oh yes. When Julia came to visit all the boys in their clean uniforms! Air Force One I think Julia fly's in..... I don't know how long she stayed in Coonabarabran, but her plane was too big to stay at Coonabarabran airport, so the pilot had to take off and land at Tamworth and sit at the end of Tamworth's run- way for the duration of Julia's visit. When she was ready, he had to fly back.

Female: Which I don't understand, if the plane's landed and people have departed the plane –and they can't sit there.

Male: I don't know whether the helicopters and fixed wings were taking off and landing – whether it was in the road. But that Coonabarabran airport is a pretty big airport; you can't just turn a plane down one end and leave it. Helicopters go straight up, the little planes.....

Carolyn: They only need a short run way.

Male: I found that quite amusing.

Carolyn: Now you were talking about Top Walga where the fellow who owns up there has been attempting to get National Parkes to create a break for many years.

Male: It's not really the National Parks, it's the RFS. It's the break which is on the eastern side of the Gumin to Toorweenah road. It's just on the bottom of the hills. They put a break in twelve years ago when the last fire was up there in 2001 and after that fire they had to push it all back in because of the conservation of the country. The Captain of the Warrumbungle Brigade wanted this break to be put in, but we could never get funding. The break is in there now, but I think we will see that it has to be pushed in again.

Carolyn: So where does that leave us for the next fire.

Male: I hope there is never another one; but, the same place as we are now.

Mrs....: Re-invent the wheel again and do it all over again and waste money, time and put people in danger.

Carolyn: So how wide would you suggest the fire break should be?

Male: Up in the National Park, however wide you made the break, you could never do it because the fireballs will go within a kilometre in front of the main fire. That was my experience when I was up there. Out in the flat country you could get away with four five meters, something to back burn off, or sit there and wait for it -on a grass fire.

Female: As we have discussed, there's no use having something where a truck can't turn around. If they get caught going up a fire break it needs to be wide enough so a truck can do a turn, so it needs to be wide enough for access.

Carolyn: To your knowledge what is the National Parkes fire plan?

Male: What is the National Park's fire plan? That's a good one! I don't think they have even got one. I think National Parkes should do a course on National Parks Fire. The first ten chapters on back burning: back burn, back burn, back burn. Don't worry what they burn; just back burn. That's my attitude of it: the slower they work the better it is.

Carolyn: and of course they are paid.

Male: Oh yeah they are paid big money - good money; well the V in Volunteers is just non existent we're just a breed.....

Carolyn: Where you satisfied with the chain of command? Were you comfortable and secure with those in charge and giving orders? Were the orders comprehensive, clear and practical?

Male: I received no orders. We are on the western side of the National Park; we did what we thought was right. There was nobody out here telling us what to do. The landholders called us in and in we went. There was none.

Female: Not once actually were we contacted or heard of anyone being contacted from anyone of authority from the RFS in Coonabarabran.

Male: We got called out on the land holders wishes; they asked us 'could you bring your equipment and men to our properties' and we did.

Female: we used our own commonsense and our local knowledge of everything. The men know how to attack these things and they have learnt from their fathers and local knowledge is marvellous.

Carolyn: And you achieved your purpose.

Male: On this side of the mountains, yes we did.

Female: Not only that, we are also training young ones. They were taking the young fellows up who were local land holders who'd never seen the magnitude of a fire like this. So my husband not only had the responsibility of the fire and his own safety, he had the responsibility of two young men who were agile and capable, but not with the knowledge. He was teaching them how to use the truck, keeping them safe and giving them the experience that they need to have.

Carolyn: It always used to work and it still does.

Female: Yes

Male: I am not going to be here for ever. If there is another fire in the National Park I won't be going up there again and neither will my crew while I am still captain. Been there, done that.

Carolyn: You were saying this because of the inadequate management and the chain of command?

Male: There was no chain of command. There was no management .I just won't go up into the National Park.I will help the landowners on the boundary of the National Park, but I will never go into the National Park and fight a fire.

Female: But you were caught in the centre of it at the park.

Male: Yes, but when our lives are put at risk ....

Carolyn: Tell me about that Sunday..



Male: What do you want to know?

It's the most scariest day in my entire life I think. I have had operations for cancer; I pulled out of them, but I didn't think I was going to pull out of this one- it was just horrific. We were asked to evacuate the park at about two thirty. We said, "where do we go"? They replied "up to the tourist information centre; wind the windows up in your truck and you sit there; just wait till the wall of fire goes over the top of you." It's all right for these modern trucks that have airconditioning, we don't have air conditioning, so we had the windows down. We saw a great wall of fire go across the tourist information centre straight north west I suppose, just a big wall of fire and smoke.

Female: Just prior to that you were asked to save the ablution block weren't you.

Male: No that was afterwards.

Carolyn: This is the RFS asking you to sit there?

Male: This is the National Park. We were in the National Park jurisdiction. We were asked to go up there by the RFS on the Sunday morning to give them a hand to back burn. They knew it was going to be extreme weather conditions that afternoon. I wouldn't have done a back burn, I would have tried to put it out with aircraft. We went up there, did that and all of a sudden hell broke loose. The wind changed, the temperature went up to over fifty degrees. We were wetting ourselves with the hoses, just to keep cool. We were lying in a creek when we were filling up with water.

Female: and you were fighting the fire as you were filling up.

Male: Yeah at one stage we were filling up and fighting the fire with the motor going- (water going in water going out, so we didn't get burnt) to fill up; then we were told to evacuate the park. They said they came looking for us for an hour, but they didn't know where we were: I said "you know where we were because you sent us here" at Camp Blackman.

Carolyn: Because you don't have walkie talkies do you?

Male: We did not have radio contact. There was only the three of us. All three of us were out of the truck; one manning the hoses and the other two holding the hoses. That was all right. We went back up to the Tourist Information Centre. A wall of fire had gone over it; I was just so surprised that the Tourist Information Centre was still up there. There would have been ten vehicles there I suppose, fire fighting vehicles, and they decided to go and have a look at the Tourist Information Centre. It was still standing. They reckoned there was a bit of smoke up in the roof. With the man power we had there we could have put that Tourist Information Centre out. But no they wanted us to help move computers and stuff. I suppose I could be arrested for looting, because I went in there and grabbed ice cream and drinks for my crew. We had run out of water and stuff. The wall of fire went through. We were told there was

a low loader going to head west out of the park and one of the RFS fellows would go and follow that low loader out to get out. We got the short straw we were not allowed to go. One of the Timor trucks was allowed to go. They sent us down to Camp Blackman to make sure and put out the amenities block. They weren't too worried about the Tourist Information Centre but they were more worried about the amenities block. So we went down there and tried to put out the amenities block. Ran out of water again, came back and one of my crew said "Let's go". And I said 'we came with a full load of water we will go home with a full load of water.' We pulled up at the Tourist Information Centre where there was a tanker; we filled up, I went and saw the man in charge of the National Park and said: "We are out of here." he said, "You can't go anywhere, we have got to stay." so we sat in our trucks again and by this time the National Park boys were all sitting down there with cameras looking at the Tourist Information Centre go up in a puff of smoke .We sat there and said "come on lets go - we have got to go".

Female: This was about nine o'clock at night

Male: A bloke rang up the low loader fellow and said "Can they get out? He said "No there is too much smoke." So we stayed there a bit longer. We said, "no, we have had enough: we have got to go." At this stage, I reckon I would have decked someone. So then we turned around and the head of the National Park said "I will try and get out". So he went down on the western side and came back and said "Yeah you can get out." That was all right. We got out. The low loader fellow, who had said there was too much smoke to get out, he was sitting five kilometres away from the National Park. Yeah! Of course there is going to be a lot of smoke! We got up there at eight o'clock in the morning (AM) and got home at ten o'clock from something I will never go through again.

Carolyn: 8 am to 10pm

Male: Yeah we were sitting up there; for six hours of that we were just sitting in our truck.

Female: You drove out just going across logs and things didn't you.

Male: Yeah

Female: Just tell us what you saw in that car.

Male: We happened to be coming out of the National Park and there was this car. We pulled up along side of it and said "you won't get any further" he said "we just come to have a look". That's all right. We took off again. At this time we were ...

Carolyn: done completely done

Male: Mentally and physically we were exhausted. This car overtook us and flicked out a cigarette. My two blockes in the truck said "Up em". I said the

truck won't go fast enough. We said 'That will do us. Fire started with cigarettes and now'... We just laughed it off. We were that tired, it was a big joke.

Carolyn: How many National Parks fire trucks were up there with you?

Male: On the Saturday or the Sunday?

Carolyn: on the Sunday when you went through what you just told us.

Male: There was five four Cat 9's and two Cat 7's.

Carolyn: And you maintain that the Tourist Centre could have been saved.

Male: Yeah, I will go to my grave saying that. I was asked by the Coonabarabran detective "do you have experience putting out houses" I said "No." But I said "National Parkes would have". I said "If it was on my land, my house, that house would be still standing now." One of my brigade members was heavily involved in the Lyons Club and they sent a lot of clothing over to Papua New Guinea. There were all those t-shirts and shirts with the Warrumbungle National Park on them. He said, "if I knew it was going to burn I would of gone in there and grabbed it all and sent it over to New Guinea." We couldn't touch anything - we just had to watch it burn. They are paid seventy bucks an hour to sit down and watch it - all of them - with their phones.

Carolyn: Was there a person in charge there that you could name?

Male: There is a person.

Carolyn: And you could take this to the top?

Male: Yeah Yeah. If he still has a job when this is all over and done with I mean....it's just stupidity - what he put us through.

Carolyn: He put your lives at risk in no uncertain terms.

Male: Yeah, then they were talking about getting helicopters in to evacuate us. Just imagine me hanging onto one of those ropes – going out on a helicopter. I have a crew member that hates flying; we would have had to dong him on the head and knock him out to get him into the helicopter; They said " there's too much smoke now, we couldn't get out - we're here for the night." I said "No we're not here for the night." The wall of fire had already gone through. There was nothing left to burn. Just driving out of there at night time, something you wouldn't see in a movie.

Carolyn: Horrific, how you found your way?

Male: I've been through that park plenty of times I could nearly do it blind folded. When they said you can't go for the last two hundred metres I said " if I

can get to the last two hundred meters I could walk out of there with my eyes shut “. “Oh no,too much smoke.” But when the low loader was five kilometres away - we saw red.

Carolyn: You must have felt absolutely terrified and angry and frustrated? How do you feel you have come out of this? I mean that was a terrible experience to go through.

Male: Um...I have come through. I've come out of it - how would I say – with a different attitude on the National Parks and Wildlife management system. I will never go back into the National Park and fight a fire ever again. I will wait for it to come out and I will put it out. It's something I don't think I will ever want to go thru again. There was just nothing. There was no organization there was no communications. We were just told to do this- we did that - and all they wanted to do is back burn back burn back burn.

Carolyn: And then they did not save the Centre.

Male: No

Carolyn: Mrs. ...that must have been very difficult for you

Female: Well it was, knowing that they were all up there, exhausted any way. Thank goodness I could contact him by phone or some of the boys by phone, at times, but it was an awful three to four days. It was just horrific. Because even though you know you are safe in your home, you hear of these stories every summer; you hear of people thinking they're safe and they are not. So it's always in the back of my mind, thinking “Am I safe?” My husband had gone my brother in law had gone, our only fire truck and water here on the place had gone, so we're vulnerable back here; we have a forty eight or forty six degree heat with winds, we have got stubble paddock out the front. You know, one morning, I think it was the Tuesday morning when it was still pretty awful, **I had Country Energy driving across my stubble paddock out the front .I just could not believe it. I rang up and I mentioned it to them pleasantly, but she said “ you have to put in a complaint”.I said “if that is what I have to do I've got to do it, but” I said “please let the people know we have a designated road to that pole that they needed to see. Please make people informed that you don't drive through a stubble paddock, especially in January, especially when it's plus forty degrees”. So, your faith in human ability or human common sense - it's just non existent.**

Carolyn: And we find still there is a greater gap - and it's getting greater, between the metropolitan people- the city people and the town people and us, the bushies. It is just getting greater. We will have to try and make them understand. I don't know, if they can't use the common sense at that stage. I mean, we even had a situation where I'd been told they were trying to do a fire break- a burn back -and it was pulled. They couldn't do it any longer and the reason? “Because there is a total fire ban”.

Female: Ooh dear

Carolyn: What can we do but laugh at that? Then you get a helicopter putting a break out that's just been lit -and you get your electrician going thru the paddock. What do we have to do to make them realise -this is common sense!?!.....

Female: Yes .That's right. Has common sense been taken away from many of our organisations? We know we are so over-governed we need to have common sense bought back and country people have common sense. We live with it, we look after our selves, but in times of need we look after our neighbours as well. We seem to know what we are doing, but the people who we think we should be able to rely on - we don't have faith.

Carolyn: No we don't have faith. You're quite right. Do you think there should have been a command centre at Gumin Gumin? It has been said that the Coonamble centre was not represented. What do you think about that \_\_\_\_.

Male: There was no representation on the western side of the Warrumbungle National Park anyway; we did every thing our selves; we used our own devices. There should have been a command centre, but they would of got them selves in the road anyway; they would have had to go back to Coonabarabran to get their meals. They would not survive out here on a glass of water.

Carolyn: As you did

Men: Yeah - we didn't get fed.

Female: or watered

Carolyn: So having a command centre at three points which was really required by this fire we just had, would have allowed every body to be looked after and allowed instructions to go through on site instead of someone giving instructions from the command centre.

Male: Just have somebody here hands on. It's all right to make a decision in Coonabarabran, but they didn't have a clue what the fire was doing this side of the mountains. I'll just give you a prime example. On the Friday towards the end of the fire the RFS hierarchy from Coonabarabran thought they would take a drive out to the southern end of the fire at Mt Terrace. **They turned up there, they were driving around in a Ford car and driving on all the tracks and they said 'we need bulldozers and we need graders' .A bloke said, "How do you think this road got put in - with shovels and crowbar?" There have been two graders and two bulldozers here for the last three days! He was about to ring up and get another on here! We don't need it.**

Carolyn: Been there done that.

Male: They've just got to have the authority and they've got this gear at their beck and call. It was just ludicrous.

Female: Boys with their toys almost!

Male: We ran this fire on this side of the mountain on our own.

Female: At Gumin it would have been very helpful from my point of view, as the wife who was rung twenty times a day from our brigades' members asking what they could do- what's going on -who can we speak to- and all that.If I could have rung or gone up, its only six or seven kilometres away to ask them "What's the procedure what's going on? Do I need another team for the next twelve hours? "-(because I was organising the teams for the truck), and some times I would only have an hour's notice to say "Yes we need another team". If there was some co-ordination there we would not have overlapped. There would not be all these men out for five days six days in a row. They could have been every other day out and done probably a more efficient job.

Carolyn: Also they could have slept in between and they would not have been as traumatised as they were having come out of this fire.

We were talking about pools of machinery graders on the Newell Highway.

Male: Yes I didn't actually see it, but a good friend told me the story that at the old apple stall on the highway about twenty kilometres south of Coonabarabran, there was a paddock there at one stage where there were twenty two road graders sitting in the paddock. They were asked to turn up, but were not employed they were not needed; they turned them around and sent them back. Just the resources - the gear they asked for was as far away as Bourke. It turned up here and did nothing.

Carolyn: As we discussed earlier those people who came from afar to help who were not managed - will not come back. It's too far to come to do nothing.

Male: A couple of the Shires said "Don't call us again, we'll call you".

Carolyn: That puts us in a very very difficult position.

Male: I mean the expense of moving machinery is bad enough. If you volunteer your men and machinery to do something for a fire, then use it! Don't ring up if you don't need it.

Female: On more than one occasion I heard you say people came to this site or were instructed to go to Coonabarabran first. They always had to go to Coonabarabran first; it's no easy task from this side.

Carolyn: They had to register

Female: Yes and then to come back! What's the use of it? That's six hours probably! I know on one occasion they'd gone to register and they were told to go and have a cup of tea as they had driven four hours and had to go and rest before they could come out.

Carolyn: Then they were sent home the next day.

Female: I question some times how these people from far away, who are very generous to give their time and expertise to fight any fire. But on occasions, we wondered if they were fighting fires or they were up here for the thrill of it - sitting on the edges, not getting to close to the fire. Because our fire truck is burnt, it's black, it's charred; it's lost a lot of equipment because the fellows use each others equipment and it goes into other trucks and other things. Yet, there are those trucks that still remain shiny and there is not a thing melted on them- not a thing. How accountable are these people who travel to these massive fires? How do we know how efficient or helpful they are?

Male: They turn up there to have a photo with Julia Gillard front page of the Telegraph.

Female: Possibly! I don't know.

Carolyn: I think some of the issues are OH&S. We are under the banner of OH&S to the degree that we can't make a mistake - it's our fault. It should apply when volunteers are taken on board to any scene, I believe. If they are not physically able to do the job, why are they there? If they are over a certain age? They say you can't say 'no' to a volunteer. Of course you can – 'age doth weary them'.

Female: You place them in a volunteer role that is fitting to their age, ability or what ever. You don't let any body do anything – or everything.

Carolyn: Imagine if one of those incapable volunteers had lost their lives some where in the Warkton Valley, it would have been a state funeral. That's incongruous isn't it?

Male: If that happened on the eastern side of the park... but if it happened on the western side of the park we would have dug a hole and buried the man. It would not have got mentioned.  
It was unbelievable, there is one side and the other side...don't start me.

Carolyn: The cost of fuel. A lot of land owners had to use their own fuel. Where are you at with that?

Male: I told our group captain that I put over seven hundred litres of my own diesel into the fire truck. He said I will be reimbursed. I hope I am still alive to see it. There was just no access; they had tankers there with water, why couldn't they have tankers there with fuel to fill up these trucks? I mean, you can't leave a fire ground and drive forty ks and come back again and hope the fire has not moved. We were changing shifts here on our property and we were filling up at the same time .If the truck did not come back we just waited or went to another property owner and said "Can we pinch some diesel -and yeah– not a problem". These things need fuel we all need fuel. Trucks, when they stop - that's it. Humans, we just keep battling on even if we do get a glass of water.

Carolyn: It took you two hours after you requested some water?

Male: From the National Park.

Carolyn: For them to bring it back to you

Male: They had to bring it back to you and that was only taken out of that kiosk at the Tourist Information Centre ;it was very nice when we got it but it wasn't enough. We were battling temperatures over sixty degrees.

Female: You were battling not being bombed by the sewerage of Coonabarabran in the park . The water was being accessed from Coonabarabran

Male: The helicopters were picking up the sewerage out of the pits at the park to bomb the thing.

Carolyn: Some people said it just stank.

Male: Yes, the smell! We just hoped they were good pilots and it didn't drift over towards us. That would have just topped our day off.

Carolyn: It would have just been yet another thing. I tell you what - good fertilizer!

Female: Very good.

Carolyn: Thank you both very much that has been very informative and it's your experience and people need to hear it.