

INQUIRY INTO WAMBELONG FIRE

Name: Mr Llewelyn Selmes

Date received: 30/01/2014

Partially Confidential

To Whom it May Concern,

In January 2010 my Wife and I along with our 2 young sons moved to Coonabarabran with the intention of giving our previously purchased farm ago.

Our intentions were to put all we had into our stock, building up our numbers, start to do the farm up, and eventually build ourselves a home.

We struggled living in a caravan, later leasing the old farm house next door to our property. Work wasn't easy to find but we hung in there.

2012 it started to come together we both found employment and our cattle numbers were up to 132. We had purchased some stud dorper ewes which had just lambed and our boys loved their first lamb marking.

The boys were selling firewood to campers for pocket money and we were doing up an old barn for farm stay and hunters to use.

On Sunday January 13 2013 a fire ripped through our entire property of 3600 acres in a few hours, it was like the aftermath of an atomic bomb.

Everything was destroyed, our home, our ute, 2 quad bikes, our barn, fences and yards, pets and livestock. For us seeing our livestock all the dorpers destroyed, the cows looking like Hippo's. It was that hot they didn't even have any hair, it was soul destroying and heart breaking.

We had no insurance, we took a gamble and put all we had into our livestock.

We were left homeless and helpless, having only what we could fit in the car.

Our neighbours, friends and the community have been amazing and helped us out a lot.

We are neighbours with the National Park and they always call and tell us when they are doing an aerial shoot or baiting feral animals, but there was no call to let us know there was a fire burning in the Park, with enough fuel in front of it to wipe us off the map.

I work in the Mining industry and I have done contract work in the park and everything you do has to have a risk assessment.

I'm sure that putting all resources into putting the fire out on the Saturday afternoon and night would have much less risk than doing a back burn on Sunday the 13th in catastrophic conditions with strong winds and temperatures of 46 degrees.

The fire burnt that hot it destroyed all vegetation and wildlife. Then a week later we had very heavy rain. The flood conditions caused massive erosion, silting of dams, closing off springs, pollution of water, more damage to fencing and unparalleled germination of the livestock toxic plant darling pea.

We are left to get on with our lives and jobs in the aftermath of total devastation. We look to get funding for clean ups only to be told we make more than 50% of our income off farm making us ineligible.

We need just compensation, that day January 13th has changed our lives forever. 1 year on we are still homeless and helpless trying to get on with life and clear the dark clouds from our minds.

We have included some photos of the devastation, the date on the camera is wrong.

Yours Faithfully

Llewelyn, Fiona, Jayden and Charlie Selmes.

Formally of Timor Road Coonabarabran.



Some of our cattle



Another cow the landscape.



Some of our Dorpers



1 of our bikes.



Our gun safe and our firearms.



1 of our chooks



The wildlife



Some more of our cattle.



More cows and calves.



1 of the lucky survivors.