

Submission
No 24

INQUIRY INTO WAMBELONG FIRE

Name: Mrs Fiona Selmes

Date received: 31/01/2014

Partially Confidential

To Whom it may Concern,

On the 13th January 2013 there was a fire in the Warrumbungle National Park. This fire turned our lives upside down and destroyed almost everything we had.

As a young family our land and stock were our future and in a split second it was all gone.

We believe that the response by the National Parks was very inadequate. We feel it was very slow and unorganised, and that cost precious time and severe devastation to the local region and community.

The week before the fire, the National Park was supposed to be closed. We lived at the ramp on the eastern side of the National Park and travellers and campers were entering the National Park all week. There was a very small sign on the side of the road on an A4 piece of paper, saying PARK CLOSED.

We believe the fire could have been put out on the Saturday night or even early on the Sunday morning. Instead they did a back burn in catastrophic conditions and did more damage than good. It was the back burn that got out of control and did the damage.

The Lady that found the fire on the Saturday couldn't find any National Park workers anywhere in the Park, including the Visitor Centre, the Shed and the Rangers House.

Llewelyn was first down in the park after she told us and we rang 000 and . He couldn't find anyone either.

Our belief is they acted very inadequately. They didn't act with concern for any of their Neighbours/ farmers that surround the National Park or their livestock/livelihood.

The National Park always informed us when they were baiting or shooting feral animals in the park as we were their neighbours, however with the fire their concern was dismissed as they didn't and to this day haven't rang or told us that there is a fire in the Park. This lack of concern cost us our home, our livestock, all of our infrastructure, vehicles, bikes, pets, water sources, land and our souls.

To put a price on the mental and emotional stress of the last 12 months is impossible. For us and our children it has been horrendous and heart breaking. We are lost and not sure where to turn next. Because of this we will have to go into big debt to try and get back to where we were.

Even still it wouldn't rebuild our house or our lives back to what we had.

Llewelyn and Fiona Selmes