

## **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: I am with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ it's the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013  
We're at \_\_\_\_\_ which has experienced a dreadful dreadful time at in this  
Warrumbungle fires. We are just going to sit and talk and answer a few  
questions which they have already perused and we will go on from there.

Carolyn: What is the National Parks Fire plan to your knowledge?

Male: No idea.

Female: None? No idea.

Carolyn: Would you say a little bit ....they don't have one?

Male: No I am sure they have one. They do have a plan I am sure. It's nothing  
to do with us.

Carolyn: Except when it infringes on your property.

Male: I am sure that's not their plan.

Carolyn: No that's right. Having said we think they have a plan, do you think  
they have undertaken to maintain a proper safety level in the Park?

Male: I can't see how they can really. Just letting country go natural; it's just  
waiting for a fire. I just don't believe country can be left like that.  
Whatever their plan is, I mean if they do have to burn it all the time that's what  
they do I guess. That's just what happens here isn't it, it just burns.

Carolyn: It's been suggested that maybe there should be eighty foot instead of  
eight foot breaks. Would you agree with that?

Male: Well, that's just not going to happen here is it, in these hills; doesn't  
matter how big a break they've got.

Female: There are a lot of places where they could not put an eighty foot  
break; that looks good on a straight line on a map.

Male: Not is this sort of country.

Carolyn: What about accessibility?

Male: I think they have good tracks through there. I guess they could use  
more through there's a lot of inaccessible places. I have been on some of the  
tracks!

Carolyn: So you wouldn't call them clear and open tracks,

Male: No, but they were good four wheel drive tracks. They're not fire breaks.

Carolyn: No actually, I am talking about accessibility as in roads; about getting in with four wheel drives, rather than on the break.

Carolyn: Wouldn't the break have to be on the outside perimeter of the National Park?

Male: If it was their break it would be on their side of the fence.

Carolyn: How could they do a break with all that timber in side.

Male: Well there is no difference on our side of the fence.

Carolyn: I suppose it's not, see I come from the flat country.

Male: The fence just goes on the top of the hill. A lot of the time it doesn't even matter if that hill country burns any way. It's just that it was a pretty bad day for a fire- a bad week, it was pretty dry and hot.

Female: It was just in such a rage - the fire storm, when it got out.

Male: It roared through country that wasn't National Park too - maybe the land holders too really.

Carolyn: Do you think from what you've learned that it could have been handled quicker and maybe doused.

Male: Yes, yep, especially around here at night. We would be watching, the whole hill would be ablaze at night and in the morning it would be smoking- nothing much there. If a lot of teams and helicopters had gone in then it would have been far better than waiting for it to flare up again in the afternoon.

Carolyn: But that didn't seem to happen.

Male: No No No

Carolyn: Would you think that's due to the chain of command?

Male: I guess, maybe not having people here to see that. I did mention to a guy that the fires calm down at night and he was a bit surprised. The first couple of nights we were watching them, they'd gradually burn out – flicker out; there would just be smouldering logs. You could see where the grass had burnt during the night and stopped; there'd be logs smouldering as if they had been rolled over or watered. But that's a real man power thing isn't it, a Chinese army sort of job.

Carolyn: Well maybe, and it has been suggested that really the army should have been brought in; because the area was so massive even before it got away.

Male: Well yes. Fit, keen people would have done a lot better.

Carolyn: And well organised.

Male: Yes and well organised. Yes at the right place at the right time. But you had to be prepared to go in on foot.

Carolyn: The helicopters, do you think if they come in earlier?

Male: Oh yes.

Carolyn: I suppose we have to ask the –why weren't they.

Male: Do they have enough helicopters?

Carolyn: Apparently there were ten helicopters and eleven fixed wing aircraft involved in this. But we're talking about the early stages of the fire.

Male: Well, there were a couple of helicopters arrived very quickly. There were two here that dropped a couple of loads and I am really not sure where they went. But, they really needed to concentrate on an area.

Female: That's what we kept hearing from the Div Coms, that it is such a massive front that...

Male: And there are more houses in peril.

Female: So, we'd lose them (the helicopters) which is understandable.

Carolyn: Which is why you'd wonder why they did not act quicker - knowing the wind velocity, it had all been predicted before, knowing the heat

Male: But they didn't know where it was going to be I guess; it could have been any where in NSW couldn't it.

Carolyn: Well, not to this degree, not with this area to burn...and

Male: I guess they knew that fire was going in the park any way. When did it start? Saturday. But they looked like they had it under control.

Female: We were watching the smoke here on Saturday afternoon.

Male: and it seemed to die down didn't it.

Female: It did and it was ten o'clock next morning when we saw it start to go again. I would like to know a bit more about that.

Carolyn: Well I can tell you one of men said that he was called to that fire and they put a lot of water on three logs and two weeks later it's still burning it was still alight underground.

Carolyn: So we have been talking about the chain of command. The question really was were you comfortable and secure with those who were in charge and giving the orders?

Male: Well it's always good to have them about I guess

Female: It was good when we got Div Com on the place and then they got orders from other people as well. It such a chain of command isn't it.

Male: **Yes. I was happier to see trucks rather than Div Com.**

Carolyn: Were they experienced enough to make you happy to have them here?

Male: The trucks.

Carolyn: The people manning the trucks.

Male: It's just good to have the

Carolyn: the power..

Male: Yeah to have the water and the equipment. **The earth moving guys were probably best.** Most effective weren't they.

Female: They were, they were very keen the graders and the bulldozer drivers.

**Male: They were professionals. They were getting paid to be professionals I guess.**

Carolyn: Well, they have only got one angle to look at too, so they know that, they know how to drive and where it will go, whereas, probably a lot of the volunteers have not been in this sort of country before.

Male: No, and when those guys were relieved someone else just jumped in and...

Carolyn: It was immediate.

Female: It was amazing what they did at night - where they would go; pretty scary places, they just went and did it.

Male: It was the only way to contain it

Carolyn: So \_\_\_\_ I remember you told me you were sort of running things and \_\_\_\_ was out fighting. Did you feel supported?

Female: Yes absolutely every one was very good.

Carolyn: and you felt they knew what they were doing? Those who operated with you were fine, but above that, where the commands were coming from...?

Female: I think so, every one was pretty professional, yes.

Male: They seemed like they were in control.

Female: No one ever got too flustered and even when there were a couple of times they were calling them 'catastrophic' they seemed quite calm calling it that.

Male: Very matter of fact- even if they weren't right! They kept telling us that the fire was coming from that way- then that way....

Woman: but they kept calm.

Male: They kept their cars running!

Female: Well only some of them. Some sat in the air conditioning all day.

Male: Ready to go

Carolyn: They were far from away.

Female: They would have been.

Male: They were Div Coms.

Female: Their scribes sat in the air conditioning I suppose. The controllers seem to sit in the air conditioning -I don't know what controllers do - but they seem to sit in the air conditioning and some times they parked opposite, away from the fire - just looking away from it.

Male: That's all the chain of command isn't it; for every four trucks they need a controller and that sort of thing.

Female: Which I suppose you have to do; you can't have people running around every where.

Male: Willy nilly.

Female: I suppose that's what they felt we were doing.

Carolyn: Well I suppose the controller is a person who jumps when somebody says I need a climate report or I need water or I need another set of gear for somebody; they are the ones who have to orchestrate getting those things to the site.

Female: So they do play an important role. Everyone plays an important role; at the fire, just as long as you do it to the best of your ability. I think they did realise they needed the local help on this one. It's not easy how to get there. Lucky we had four children - palming them off to show them how to get there, particularly in the night.

Carolyn: That must have been terrible, sending the kids up.

Female: It wasn't good.

Male: It wasn't good. It was lucky we had them.

Carolyn: So they all came home straight away.

Female: Yes and get ready to take the next lot out then. We don't have too much harsh to say about the RFS. We were really pleased to have them on hand; they could throw a lot of resources at us.

Male: I just think where it started from is the problem - where it came from.

Female: It got such a build up by the time it got out of there, it was raging; it was an absolute fire storm.

Male: It did rage down a lot of private property too.

Female: Oh it did but, there was no pulling it up then, there was nothing anyone could do.

Male: Not in that country. Shouldn't have been allowed out

Carolyn: What about your communications did you have adequate communications?

Male: I thought it was very good.

Carolyn: So you had mobile ability?

Female: We do, the majority of us.

Male: If the mobile didn't work the UHF did.

Female: The UHF's really played a big part.

Male: I could talk to her here and she could be on the phone.

Female: We have a big aerial on the house. Lots of our ones had hand held radios so it was good; somebody would be talking and if somebody knew more they could cut in; it's much more than a mobile phone. They were great. A few of the Coonamble people have commented on that. Some of the captains that were here said those hand held radios were fantastic.



Carolyn: I think every truck has to have one doesn't it but they are not supplied, that the brigade has to buy it.

Male: Do they? Well ours were stolen out of our truck any way.

Female: The whole radio and everything

Carolyn: When?

Male: Parked in the shed.

Female: Just before the fires started. Most of our locals have hand held radios.

Male: Or in their utes.

Female: So they were great. Most of the mobile phones workin most places. Between mobile phones and UHF, I think we had pretty good communications and there was a lot of communicating, it went 24 hours every day, people were talking and if they needed help...

Male: It was good having a base station here. We were talking to my wife not fire Com. There was just no point.

Female: They could just say we need four trucks or we just need help.

Male: We just need more trucks.

Female: Then I can go and tell them exactly where they needed to go and send a chid to take them up. (Laugh?) We could then talk to the choppers with UHF-everything. It was really good.

Male: Right. I wish I knew when that chopper was hovering there and the fire was there.

Female: It took us a little while to work that out.

Male: Just fires flared up behind us all the time or behind someone. It was let get away too many times. Lack of having people staying where they were meant to stay.

Carolyn: Had you been informed that your local input would have been utilised by the pilot, you could of probably...

Male: Maybe he could have been a bit more urgent, giving someone in authority a bit more of a hurry up. I am not sure what was going on at that time

Carolyn: Near the TV tower they were battling it there.

Male: The choppers almost had it out there and if there'd been another crew sent in- maybe on the ground to mop up a bit more... that's when it flared up and went down the other valley behind us on the Thursday night.

Carolyn: So we have covered that about the shifts, because they weren't happening directly as people left. You weren't getting replacements.

Male: No. That was the morning thing. They were happy to stay up all night but not happy to be here in the morning when it was so important – when so much more could have been done.

Carolyn: Surely that would have been strategy- they would have been aware of that?

Male: I would have thought so. If they cannot see a fire, they are not going to look for it I guess. That was their problem, because things looked nice and calm here at six o'clock. At eight o'clock there would be a bit of smoke and at ten o'clock it would be going.

Female: all sorts of drama again. One morning we were desperately crying for help over there, that would have been Wednesday morning and we had been promised helicopters- air support and we were just not getting it. We were watching it just flaring up and we just....

Male: A couple of buckets of water in the right place..... but then they were concerned in another area.....

Female: Yes, they were back over with another fellow looking after his house I think.

.....

Carolyn: We are introducing their son to this interview who lives here with his parents and he has been through these fires with them as well. He has just limped in and he is injured! I am going to ask him how it happened.

Son: I took a chunk out of my leg really; just working with the helicopter, trying to show them where to go really: I fell on a rock.

Carolyn: So what did you do strip of a shirt sleeve or what.

Son: No the fire truck there gave me a bandage I just wrapped it around and that was it.

Female: And one of friends is a paramedic so they took a photo on the phone and sent it to her and she told him how to dress it, what to do with it.

Carolyn: And I am asking if communications good.!!

Son: We were having a bit of fun with it with all the blood.

Carolyn: Stitches

Son: No it was too late, I should have gone in straight away.

Female: It took three weeks to get you into town. It's going to be a lovely scar.

Son: Something to remember it by that would be good.

Carolyn: There - on the shin bone?

Son: Yes on the shin

Carolyn: Could you see the bone.

Son: I didn't look that hard.

Carolyn: So what's your experience now that the fires are behind you and the hills are greening up. How are you feeling?

Son: Tired, but all the support's been pretty good. Been getting a lot of help afterwards. It took a while at the start. It's been pretty good now, Got a lot still to go though yet.

Carolyn: That's a burden - to look to the future and think all that's got to be redone.

Son: Well yes, probably should have been done anyway.

Female: Those fences were there before!

Son: Yes, they were there been there for a while and they will be there for a while yet.

Carolyn: So you are looking at the positive sides.

Son: You have to really don't you, it just weighs you down otherwise.

Carolyn: Absolutely. So you heard about this accident obviously as soon as it happened.

Female: I think he just walked in and there was just blood everywhere. His aunt was here as well and she soaked up the sock and the sock protector she just could not believe it; she just came back looking very pale and said "there's a huge amount of blood loss there."

Son: The dogs liked the smell of it I remember walking out the gate and they were pretty quick.

Female: So we just dressed you up and he went straight back to work again.

Carolyn: So are you planning on having a break?

Son: I still have a while to go yet; still got shearing yet; it starts in a couple of weeks. If it keeps on raining it will make things easier.

Carolyn: Do you farm here?

Son: Not here we put in oats and everything, but we won't harvest it.

Carolyn: Not now.

Son: No we don't here any way. its all for pasture. We try and fatten some things.

Carolyn: How about your young brother back at boarding school in year 12. He reckons he's very pleased to be back there!

Son: He would be having a great time.

Female: He rolled a motor bike, a four wheeler when he was with the firies. So we are very fortunate to have him too. We had a really bad night on the Thursday night. Everybody was asked to pull an all nighter, so he got the job of taking a grader and bull dozer up to put in a big containment line on one of the southern ridges. He rolled the motor bike about ten that night and he didn't get back in until four in the morning; he was very shaken and disturbed by that experience and the four wheeler even more; it was a bit of a mess and it went clean over him. He is very lucky.

Son: I just heard what the bull dozer driver told me; that was a couple of days afterwards.

Female: It must have rolled over him and kept rolling down a hill.

Son: Yeah it sort of bounced over him.

Female: And my son was running down after it..

Son: trying to stop it

Carolyn: The things you don't realise.

Female: I think my daughter was out on a motor bike until half past three that morning too.

Son: I was starting to get low in fuel on my bike. I need a new bike.

Female: She took a bike out to you and she also had to take

Son: She had to take fuel out to dad too to keep him going.

Female: Then she took out a grader to you as well.

Carolyn: So you needed the whole family?

Female: We did every one of them; every one was working hard.

Son: We just had it on three fronts really. Pretty spread

Female: So it was probably an eight k front for us then.

Son: It would have been; it was coming down on three sides then.

Carolyn: So that was a massive front.

Female: Every one had their job to do.

Carolyn: I know you are waking up with terrors.

Female: Yes yes. Well the other night I was waking up and dreaming that my son was infected every where and bits of him were falling off: all sorts of things you wake up worried about. It's very hard to sleep properly still. All the people who ring in, it's amazing the stories they tell.

Carolyn: Their reactions..

Female: Yes their night mares.

Son: Yes, I'd better go to work now.

Carolyn: Thank you very much, I appreciate that and I hope you get better.

Carolyn: ..... I wonder if I could ask you how you saw the fire from the point of view the fact that you happened to be running the command centre at your own home. You were surrounded on three fronts by a fire which I think you said had an eight kilometre front at one stage.

Female: Yes that's what we think it was on the Thursday night. It's massive isn't it.

Female: It was frightening in that we had so many people working here on different fronts and just the different level of emergencies. We did actually call 000 that night as well, because we were concerned that we were putting lives in danger. It was very frightening.

Carolyn: So were you on your own in the house at all during this period?

Female: I suppose during the night I would have been here alone. I suppose our youngest daughter would have been having a sleep at that stage. Another daughter was out on motor bikes helping to direct either trucks or graders to where they needed to be or refuelling people.

Carolyn: What ages are the girls?

Female: \_\_\_\_\_ is 18 and \_\_\_\_\_ is 21 \_\_\_\_\_ is 22 so he worked all the time. He probably only saw his bed three times in the eight days and that would of only been for short periods too. My other son, he is 16 he got home at 3 o'clock that Friday morning. He'd been out all night as well. He put in massive days as well

Carolyn: and he's the one the four wheeler when over?

Female: He is yes. He did a lot of work carrying knap sacks and climbing up mountains. Yes he worked very hard.

Carolyn: So how are you feeling back here on your own knowing your children and your husband are fighting these fires?

Female: It was very scary because none of us had any sort of experience with such a massive fire. It was good having so much communication so they could talk all the time and they do: they would talk quite a lot to let me know what was going on, where they needed to go, what sort of help they needed, that they were alright after an accident. So that was really good. They were with good people: that was the most important thing. There was always someone within sight, looking after each other. That was very important and that has been the positive thing I think. I was listening to people talk about the fires afterwards, they talked about the comraderie of it. They thought they were fighting together, they were eating together and sometimes sleeping on the ground together and they really enjoyed the comraderie of it. So that's been a very special thing; and they probably got to know people in the community, that they hadn't had a lot to do with before. So there have been some really strong positive points come out of the fire like that; and just how wonderful, how generous people have been with their time.

Carolyn: You were talking about the girls taking over. You were feeding people.

Female: We were probably feeding up to thirty or forty of the locals every day. The girls were great; they made so many different sorts of sandwiches. They really got into preparing the nicest sandwiches they could -lots of cranberry sauce with the turkey! All sorts of things, they were great. So we would pack off their lunches to them and their dinner. We had it all worked out. So lots of cold drinks, lots of cold oranges – (they were popular), then lots of different slices; Anzac biscuits date scones, any thing they could hold in their hands and be able to keep moving. Two of our girls went off and delivered lunch on the Friday and that's when things were looking pretty bad up there at the TV Tower. They had to drive from our property all the way round on the TV Tower road. They rang up very distressed because they were just covered in smoke, the helicopters were water bombing close to them, so they didn't know where to go and it was a one way road; only one way in and one way out. They rang up mildly hysterical so my son talked them in to the area and they delivered all

their lunches. He said 'they were shaken and stirred'. The poor girls, they got back and they were -----. Even the chuck wagon had a fright!. So it's all those things; everyone did their part as best they could. It was good having so many of the wives here because we were so concerned. It was nerve racking watching it. So they could be here, they could listen to the UH, they knew what was going on, they could hear their husbands' voices or their sons' voices, plus they were in a group. There was lots of talking - every now and then, there was lots of laughter. We would all watch the TV at night to see what they were saying about our fire. So, it was very positive as a community. We are very fortunate to live in a small community where every one knows each other so well and are willing to step in and help.

Carolyn: Yes, there's nothing quite like it.

Do you feel you were treated with dignity and consideration at all times?

Female: I do except for two occasions. Yes everybody was fantastic- very considerate and very respectful. I did have one upsetting situation. A team came in at about ten o'clock at night and things were really hotting up on our property. It was a lady: I'd called for extra help, they had promised me ten trucks and she was the first truck to turn up. When she jumped out of the truck, she told me they were 'here just to look- not to work.' They were standing down from their shift and I was probably a little bit blunt in saying: "Well if your not here to work it's probably no point being here". She said "I am just here to see what your assets are." I pointed out that the whole of the property were our assets. She told me "I was not getting the big picture. My asset was just my home"! I was very polite but probably quite blunt in saying: "No my dear, my assets are the whole of the property; it's the country, it's the cattle, it's the sheep, its every house on the place, its every shed, all our plant and equipment, every thing is our asset". And then I tried to explain how much this one house was worth compared to the rest of the business, but she was not interested. As far as she was concerned only my house was my asset. So, she drove around the house paddock for quite a few turns and couldn't find the way out -and then she left!

Then there was another one. I had asked for six trucks to be sent to the southern ridge and they were just waiting at the mail box; so I just whizzed down on the motor bike to explain to them where to go as soon as they got the call into go. They told me it wasn't up to me to tell them where to go. I said "I realise that I am just going to give you the directions now to save time." and anyway, so I did and they came back after the end of their shift and thanked me for saving time. So they were very nice, at the end of it; they just thought I was turning up to give them orders which I wasn't.

Carolyn: Nevertheless you were the land owner you did have the local knowledge.

Female: Yes, yes.

Carolyn: But you were not given priority

Female: No I think they thought I was coming to yell at them - to boss them around.

Carolyn: There seems to be an inability of town and city dwellers to understand our situations. Can there be more education for those who are paid to serve the RFS and the National Park?

Female: I think it would be great if they understood that everything was our asset and also that the homestead probably owns all the property around it; and the people in the homestead are the ones that will know where every thing is. We had one chap that sat up at a ramp about a kilometre away from the house, looked at the house for two hours and still didn't know where to go to ask directions. They don't seem to have that understanding that the homestead is the place to go to.

Carolyn: How do you feel? How have you come through this? How bad has this been for you?

Female: Um well, it was absolutely terrifying for eight days and just to be on that level of- I suppose terror and exhilaration- I don't know. There were so many different emotions going through. Staying awake for so long... I wore my walking shoes for so many days that my feet blistered and were red raw. I hadn't taken my shoe off for so many days. Your body cracks up a bit when you are on your feet for so many days. *I couldn't get a job in the artillery!* It is, it's really hard; it's just that level of tiredness and being so tired; but then when you go to have a sleep, you can't sleep for very long, you just wake up. I remember the first time I went to sleep in the afternoon, things were quietening down and then a helicopter flew over and landed at the back of the house and I thought Oh Oh I thought the fire was racing down to the house again. It was very hard. But it was really good to be around so many strong people you know. I was composed the whole time I think; I certainly did not have any tears or anything. You just have to be strong for everybody else, especially being sort of quite a centre figure with the communications in the house all the time. I had to be on the go all the time and that's probably better than looking out and wringing my hands and being really concerned about what was going to come for me. I felt like I was fighting with everybody else. I mightn't have been out with a knap sack or on a truck, but I felt like I was fighting hard from here. So that was really good; you want to be working; you want to be worthwhile.

Carolyn: It's still on your shoulders. Did you feel that a burden? You had opened up your house, your arms and you home and your property to every one and you were running it.

Female: I didn't feel that it was a burden. I just felt that someone had to do it. It was good that I could do it; and you need that local knowledge here; and just knowing so many people. I suppose I don't mind talking either! So that helps too! I was getting blunt towards the end of it - I didn't have enough words! It was just good to be a part of it. I would have hated not to be able to do it and I just wanted to help. I remember one time at two o'clock in the



morning my husband just rang: He said "It's just so nice to hear your voice." That was just lovely. That just makes me feel better - so you couldn't not be doing the best you could.

Carolyn: How do you think he is coping?

Female: I think it has been a terrible shock for him. He looks very strung out from it all; it's been really hard and when my son called me and told me he'd rolled the four wheeler, I called my husband on the radio, so it must have been later in the night about two a.m I remember calling him and the bulldozer driver answered and he said "he's away" I said "Can you get him to give me a call. We need to make this on a phone, we need a private conversation." You could tell he was terribly upset. There were some really tough times. The main thing is no one died on our place, because it very scary; we did have a triage set up, at the back of the house. We did have a number of ambulances called. I am so pleased that no one died. That would have just been horrible.

Carolyn: So, are you sleeping

Female: I am sleeping now, but I still wake up - lots of dreams. I am sleeping better and it is getting better.

Carolyn: And you're talking about it?

Female: We do. Every one wants to tell you their stories, which is good. You hear so many different stories; every one wants to talk about it. **I find it hard when some of the fellows say how emotional they are too, but it has affected everyone, it's been a massive event in our lives.**

Carolyn: **Your'e quite right. I found in my research that the women, like your self, have been able to withstand it and are still standing, but the boys have needed you so much- all the way.**

Female: I think families are so important in this situation, they really are. I can't imagine going through it on your own. All our friends have been fantastic as well. My husband's cousin came over from Tamworth to hold his hand for the week afterwards and he did an amazing job sending out cattle off to adjustment, just helping with the fences around the shearing shed. You know, just to be here and have someone else to talk to. Lots of men have been like that, they have really rallied around him; it's been fantastic.

Carolyn: And then of course - you had the flood.

Female: Yes! Oh! We so did not need the flood and the wind; it's just been so destructive. My son came in to day and noticed all our feeders have been toppled over and so many of them are quite mangled. Just all the different things that are broken or wrecked. All the different trees that are just snapped off at the butts. You probably saw the one near the cattle yards; the creek crossings are damaged, it's unbelievable. So we have not never seen such a large flood in our creek before.

Carolyn: Or such a large fire.

Female: No no

Carolyn: All within how many days.

Female: Wow that's with in three weeks isn't it. Amazing, when I came home the other day and I was stuck between trees on our road with the trees down and there was a mob of wethers between the fence and the flooded creek .So we were in danger of loosing sheep to a flood - a week after we lost them from a fire! My husband got there and got them out. That's just too cruel isn't.? Any way at least we are getting a green tinge now.

Carolyn: I was just thinking the green tinge is very evident and it gives hope.

Female:It does and it's a much nicer colour than charcoal!

Carolyn: I couldn't agree more.  
So you are finding it hard when you go to town?

Female: It is hard when you go to town. It's the people who have been through similar to yourself. They might not have lost their home, but they lost a big part of their business, with the fire and with the flood going through as the final straw. So they see you and they start crying. You try desperately not to cry and just be supportive of them. I do find, when I come home from town, I have got a headache -just trying not to cry. And then there are those people who don't think you have been affected at all! So you don't really want to go on and on about it saying yes, we have been affected. It's much easier staying at home.It's just hard when you are at Woolworths and someone is sobbing in you arms or in the main street. I don't think it is me just making them cry. It's just so sad - it's hard going to town. And then of course most people are just so supportive of you, asking what they can do to help. It's not very much unless they want to come out and do a day worth of fencing! There is not really much to do. But every one is very caring. But it is a bit hard when they say your so lucky you still have your house and you think: well I am so fortunate I still have a bed to sleep in I have lost a big part of my business. I don't feel very lucky about that there is nothing lucky about loosing your stock, so I don't think there is much lucky about it at all.