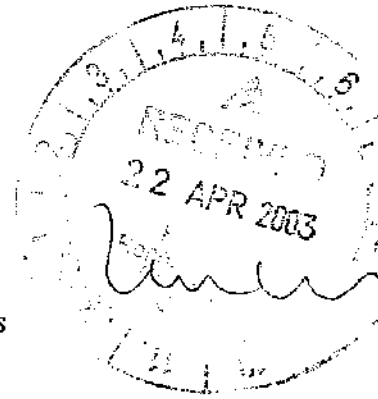




**Submission No.41**

17 April 2003

Mr Ian Dundas  
Secretary - House Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires  
House of Representatives  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Ian,

I enclose a submission to the Committee's Inquiry on behalf of my constituent, Mrs Gloria Malouf from Indigo Creek, Victoria.

Mrs Malouf felt that the bushfire experience for her was so traumatic that she was unable to make a written submission, so she called my office and dictated this submission to one of my staff members.

I hereby bring it to the Committee's attention. Please acknowledge receipt of this document.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Sophie Panopoulos'.

**SOPHIE PANOPOULOS MP**  
**FEDERAL MEMBER FOR INDI**

21<sup>st</sup> February 2003

Gloria wants the following information to be her submission to a bushfire inquiry.

On 21 January 2003 Gloria, her husband, son and nephew were caught at their house when the bushfire came down Watchbox Road. They chose to stay to protect their house and then had no exit as the fire cut the road off completely.

At 6.30pm they were told they were on their own. As the fire approached their property 14 fire trucks came out of the forest and went down Watchbox Road. They were told that a decision had been made at the fire HQ in Beechworth that the trucks were to be used to stop the fire crossing Indigo Creek Road and becoming a threat to Wodonga.

Approximately 20 people were left at 5 properties on Watchbox Road without any assistance.

The flames were 100ft high. Gloria said it was the most terrifying event of her life and she is still trying to overcome the trauma of what they went through that night. They had to eventually leave their home and go up to their dam as their lives were threatened. They lost 5 sheds, their chicken shed and their utility (not insured), but saved their home and their lives.

All the families saved their homes but lost their sheds. Their boots were burned stamping out grass fires.

The fire trucks came back at 3.00am the next morning but by then everything was on fire.

They have lived on their property for 20 years and in that time the undergrowth in the forest has only been burned once.

Gloria wants to know what happened to the 47% of her insurance policy that she paid in fire levy? Where was it on the night of the fire?

Their lives are as important as anyone who lives in Wodonga – why wasn't a fire truck left for them? Why could somebody in Beechworth make a decision to leave them without help at the height of the fire?