

I spent 20 years of my married life living and bringing up my children at Pierces Creek Forestry Settlement. We were a close-knit homogeneous community, very supportive of each other. In all these years, it was taken for granted that families did not go away together for a summer holiday because the role of our husbands was fire fighting, and to be on call throughout the entire bush-fire season. Forestry workers were trained in fire fighting and they attended all fires in the area, extinguishing them before they spread and threatened public places and the city itself.

It is now ironic and tragic that on January 18th, 2003, the residents of Pierces Creek and Uriarra settlements received very little warning or information of the impending catastrophe, and that in the hour of their need, not one fire-fighting vehicle went to their aid. This is despite the fact that the properties of all rural lessees in the vicinity were saved. It is to the credit of the Pierces Creek residents themselves, particularly my husband Eric Hayes, that the casualties on that day were not higher.

Now, 18 months later, these people are still scattered about the A.C.T., having lost their community, their possessions, and all evidence of their working life. They received very little public acknowledgement of their plight, compared to people who were affected in the more affluent suburbs of Duffy and Chapman.

It is my contention that the public housing that existed at Pierces Creek should be restored immediately, with residents being given the option to purchase. The A.C.T. Government, N.C.A and other agencies may then continue their bureaucratic wrangling ad infinitum, but let the issue be decided for the Pierces Creek community NOW.

*Mary Hayes*

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