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Committee Secretary
House Select Committee on the recent Australian bushfires

Submitted by: NEVILLE WATKINS

Address: _____

Date: 4/5/2003



INQUIRY INTO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Dear Sir / Madam,

My submission relates to the dissatisfaction with the DSE Tallangatta and their unwillingness to use resources available at the start & during the North East Bushfires.

My experience was — the day after the fires started I approached the DSE at Tallangatta at about 9-30 AM on the 9th January to offer to use my Bulldozer to help make containment

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lines & fire breaks etc

The operations manager who wasn't local said "Yes we need machines at Cravenstone & I will talk to the local Controller (Rob Cadell) & get back to you"

He did & the answer was NO we won't use you because you're not registered with us & haven't done a basic bushfire awareness course

I had registered in past years & I requested & was given the papers by Karen Brown. I then filled out the registration forms while I was there.

I am a CFA member of over 35 yrs standing.

A CFA officer that was in the Tallangatta office at the time spoke to Graham Armstrong (Operations Manager at Wodonga CFA Region 24 headquarters)

And he would have confirmed my membership & training with the CFA. All that had to be done was DSE contact him.

But DSE Tallangatta continued to decline all offers of assistance in spite of the spread of the fire and the fact I live 12 km from Tallangatta & am relatively close to Tallangatta Valley, Cravenstone, Dartmouth Mitta fire areas.

Instead I read in the

Border Morning Mail that Dozers are being brought from Gippsland (Onco Benambra areas were left to burn!!)

That's a 500 KM trip one way!

My Machine is a D65 Komatsu of 150 HP. which could have been very usefully employed I believe and may have prevented some of the losses sustained to farmland stock + other assets that were destroyed.

As the fire progressively spread the DSE personal said we don't have to put it out now it's too big we'll just protect "assets".

But that didn't include farms. My farm is an asset to me it is my livelihood, my employees livelihood + all those along the train who process my produce.

Trusting that much will be learnt + changes take place following this disaster.

yours Sincerely
Neville Watkins

PH/FAX 0260718583