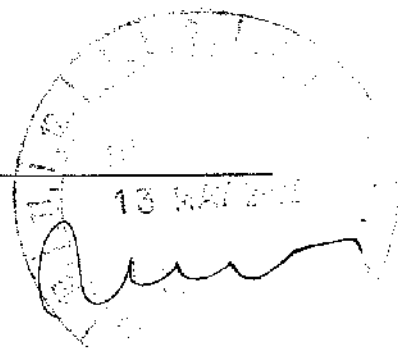


SANDRA JOHANSEN.



1 May 2003

Submission No.259

Committee Secretary,
Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA. ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to advise that my family and I were involved in the December, 4 2002 Glenorie Bush Fires. In that fire we lost our home and our business and were left only with the clothes we stood in.

Our 35 acre property, of 18 years, backs onto Maroota State Forest. With adequate cleared land between our home and bush line, irrigation over almost 2 acres around our dwelling we were told our property was reasonably fire safe and we were well prepared.

To the best of my recollection the Rural Fire Service last perimeter burned approximately 5 years ago.

The view over Maroota State Forest from our home this summer was devastating to see as huge stressed trees died from lack of water with the drought and high temperatures.

At approximately 3.15p.m. on Wednesday December 4, 2002 we saw what appeared to be a single spiral of smoke, like a camp fire, just behind our back ridge. By 3.30p.m. we witnessed a huge out of control fire front jumping from ridge to ridge viciously driven by its own energy of strong winds with unbelievable force. By approximately 4p.m. our property was wiped out by a massive wall of flames. Five Rural Fire Service fire fighters, two friends and the three members of my family found themselves facing a serious life threatening situation. Two other brave fire fighters risked all to evacuate us.

The fire wiped out almost every second property along our stretch of road and amazingly enough it chose to destroy the fire safe properties with well maintained large areas of grassed pastures and or swimming pools behind their homes.

The drought, the extremes of our weather temperatures, the delays and difficulty in obtaining city water because of a local Councils debacle over a pipe stand are just a few of the contributing factors to the destruction caused by this fire.

From what I witnessed it appeared to initially be a canopy fire, a control burn to reduce ground fuel to my mind possibly would have been ineffective in this instance as with the amount of dead or dying bush created on a daily basis this summer from the drought and extreme conditions was enough fuel for any fire.

We had no water because of the drought or much chance of getting it delivered by the previous delays caused by Hornsby Council. We purchased our own water cartage tank two days prior to the fire, because of the threat, to enable us to cart our own water to our dams and house tank, it never got used. Nor did our two fire pumps or generator get used. Almost 2 acres of irrigations in place and it never got used.

Almost 30 years since the last big fire and we were ready for this one, but no amount of preparation or expense saved our property and we lost over \$1.5m. At almost retirement age we start again with only \$220,000.00 to rebuild our home, property and lives with extreme hardship.

On an extremely tight budget we carefully selected a home we thought we could afford only to find we have an added major expense because of the new fire regulations, which we can not afford and which will probably be outdated when the next big fire comes into our backyard possibly decades down the track.. Do all existing rural properties have to abide by these new regulation or is it just another attempt to cash in on our misfortune like so many others.

We were ready for this fire and nothing we or the Rural Fire Services could do helped us.

I have now personally experienced a once in a hundred years flood and fire with both extreme forces of nature ignoring any man made intervention.

Yours faithfully,

Sandra Johansen.