

Your details

Title

Mr

First name

Brett

Last name

Wheway

Submission details

I am making this submission as

A resident in a bushfire-affected area

Submission type

I am making a personal submission

Consent to make submission public

I give my consent for this submission to be made public

Share your experience or tell your story

Your story

Initially approached by forestry cooperation late one evening, after new years fires, first thing they said was they would burn all this, first reaction was tell them to bugger off. Lived in car for 3 weeks, going down to beach everyday to wash and swim, and then going back to the property everyday to defend property. Had 2 jobs before the fires started. I managed to watch the news one evening and saw how severe the bush fires were. Forestry Cooperation to me they needed to put fire break in to protect the town of Narooma. Forestry Cooperation said that basically they had the power so could do what they wanted and was do it even if I had disagreements. Saw the news and how bad fires were, saw how fortunate Narooma was, had south eastily wind that saved Narooma. I rang and gave permission for fire breaks to be put in, Forestry Cooperation told me they would put fire breaks in one drive and out the other. We agreed on the terms that it would be kept to minimum, give me notice before attending so can move materials prior and if they needed to burn things off please give notice. 2 days later Bulldozer was on the drive ripping up drive way, tore drive to bits. I had spent 18 months creating the drive so that partner could visit on her 2 wheel drive car, that was destroyed and I could barely get my 4 wheel drive through drive way. During that period

forestry works are running all over area, making fire breaks with the intention of back burning. If they did do the back burning property would be in bad state, the fire out back was 1.5km from back fence. 3 rain fall events occurred, 8mm, 9mm & 19mm in less than 20 mins, this pretty much put the fires out. I went walking out back to check out, most of fire was out just some burning still in logs. Thurs 23rd Jan forecast as total fire ban; I could see what the forestry cooperation was planning on doing. I spent the week leading up on the phone trying to speak with liaison officer, left details multiple times, told them had already lost one job as was staying at property to defend and protect property, they promised they would give 24 hours notice before any back burn, and was told to go to work tomorrow we promise to give notice. The next day I went to work, forestry cooperation had been doing burning off in the days leading up to 23rd Jan, they lit the back breaks in 50 - 60mph winds. I informed them if they did do this my property would have been in extreme danger. there were no fire trucks left in the town and no 24 hours notice given. Once they did light up the back burn they didn't let any residents know, and then they just left and let it burn. My property completely burnt to the grounds. I had to watch the property burn, I got in car and went to fire emergency evac centre but it was closed. I drove up to work and told them he wouldn't be back for a while as property was completely destroyed. I went back to emergency centre, police pulled me over and gave directions to Narooma control centre. Spoke with receptionist at Narooma evac centre, she asked what I was going to do, I said I was going to drive to friends to stay night. She advised if driving through Narooma you can you stop at Narooma control centre the head coordinating centre for RFS etc. Went and had a cigarette with someone there then went upstairs, was told you can wait all day but there's no way the liaison officer will speak to you. Promised everything, received nothing, applied for grant, sent people out to place to take photos but because of gate structures, had already been declined before coming out to property. They asked for bank statements which I had 55k in, 8k cash lost in fires and 9k of gold lost, lost copious amounts of valuables. They must have known before that I was not eligible, phoned to inquire what was going on. a letter from Gov that was posted was dated 2 months prior to date received, called numerous times to wait on application. Still waiting on contact from Lang O'rouke. I'm living in tent in asbestos and rain. Only Gov assistance received is 1k, Red Cross 20k, Salvo and Vinnies 1k assistance received. Lost over 100k. Worked for years to build up property, I'm 47 and was considered semi-retried, worked part time at golf club. Applied for doll and was advised that payment wouldn't be until 1st May. Cost emotional trauma, lost employment, no living standards, tension with family and partner. Living in tent in a middle of paddock. Sister died in car accident when younger, lost all memorabilia in regards to her. My property wasn't burnt out by bush fires, it was burnt out by the fire breaks and back burning. Tried to emphases to forestry cooperation what damage they have caused, showing a letter from Gov, explaining financial hardship, I was then was arrested. I don't believe it was done deliberately but there was complete lack of care and no compassion, they saw it as a money maker and lit fires in places where there would never have even been fires. Had to fight again the next week to put fire out on neighbors property. 2 yute loads of forestry workers turned up and just watched from the car. Then RFS turned up and explained they needed air support, and needed it now, within 5 minutes there was air drop assistance. I almost wish someone was harmed so it would highlight all the damage that the forestry cooperation have caused.

Terms of Reference (optional)

The Inquiry welcomes submissions that address the particular matters identified in its [Terms of Reference](#).

Supporting documents or images
