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I am making this submission as	Resident
Submission type	Personal
Organisation making the submission (if applicable)	
Your position in the organisation (if applicable)	
Consent to make submission public	Public
Your story	<p>We live in a semi rural area 17klm from Milton. I am surrounded by farmland and we have horses. Our small area of open space was one of the only areas not burned out in this area, but the fires did come to our boundary twice, each time from a different direction. Each time our properties were defended by family and neighbours. The first time we were visisted by a group of firies from Albury who did assist for a while but by then we had most of it under control The RFS were unable to assist us with the second fire as we are in an area that was deemed too dangerous for them to be at the fire front. The second fire that came through our area was the New years Eve fire that was driven by the southerly change and burned out most of my neighbours who lived in the bushland surrounding our open space. My reason for this submission is to highlight my distress at the way the 2nd fire was handled as it was a "back burn" that took off once the wind changed and became a monster fire. For two days prior to the</p>

change (that we were all being warned about) the RFS watched this back burn travel slowly sideways along Woodburn Rd. They said their policy was to allow it to burn to the road which was considered a hard barrier. All the neighbours were alarmed as the lack of action being taken to stop this fire before the predicted southerly as we knew for sure it would take out many homes if it got away which is exactly what happened. Up to this time the neighbours had worked together and saved just about all the homes in the first fire but the second fire pushed with the southerly wiped them all out in twenty minutes. I am stunned no one died in this fire.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

I ride my horse in the forests near me and know the areas well I have watched over the last 15 years as the fuel load built up and up in these areas and also been stunned to see the fire trails fall into disrepair and also to see the National Parks actually block many of them on purpose with huge boulders.

1.2 Preparation and planning

Our family did have a plan. We had sprinklers on the house and had water totes on vehicles so we could fight the fire at our boundary. The power went out and this took out the house pumps which made it hard but we had a generator and a deisel pump to draw water from the house water tanks. The pastures were very short due to the drought. I firmly believe that future planning should look into having a "buffer" of pastures surround every National Park as this is what saved us and many like us. You could visibly see the fire slow once it hit the short pasture on our property which gave us a chance to control it.

1.3 Response to bushfires

We also run a home based internet business. www.hoofbootsaustralia.com.au We have found since the fires that we can only make mobile calls and cannot get any data downloads. Our area does not have copper lines so we only have access to the net with telstra towers. Telstra call centres are been totally useless and refuses to divulge any information about when our internet might return. I have now rung for two months to find out if and when the towers are going to be fixed and just get told "its due to the bush fires" with no timeline offered at all. We had to get satellite installed to run our online business at great expense. Its basically crippling our area not to have proper internet access again as we are not the only home based business in this small area and now we are all struggling to get incomes.

1.4 Any other matters

When you live in a rural area you expect that you might be impacted by fire, its a trade off for the lovely location, and if you decide to stay and defend you know you might be defending on your own. But I feel as one of those who still have a home due to the amazing efforts of my husband and neighbours that after all we have been through, now our future is uncertain. Because we have a home we do not qualify for any assistance even though our rural customers have also been devastated by these fires, so we have lost a lot of our customer base. We have lost \$20,000 of income over the three months since the fire. We employed two casual staff who now have also had no work for two months. Our insurance for our business and home will surely go up due to our location but the companies are unwilling to deal with anyone now as they are waiting to see what new regulations/restrictions councils put in place. We cannot get any quotes on future insurance for our business and stock, because the companies are waiting for the outcome of inquiries to set pricing... so many home businesses out here are now without insurance so cannot operate, especially hospitality/tourist businesses. As an aside, it is a tourist area because it is a beautiful area, we live here because we love the wildlife in the area and the lack of response from Government bodies for saving the starving and burned animals has been devastating. Animal rescue has been left up to

a few brave volunteers, left to find carers for burned animals, to organise food and water stations for these burned animals and expected to pay for much of this with their own money. There needs to be some organisation put in place that could swing into action the day after the fires and donations need to flow to those that can use them at once not be held in bank accounts by "charities". Most of the wildlife in my area are dead now. Just adds to the misery of what happened to know so many animals suffered too.

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