



Title	Mrs
First name	Lucinda
Last name	Fischer
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>On Friday the 8th of November, our lives changed forever. My parents, Peter and Rosemary Ruprecht had a beautiful 160 acre block of land located at Rainbow Flat. This block backed onto a national park. My parents had owned it for approximately 20 years, purchasing it after they sold their dairy farm due to deregulation. 'Rainbow', as their property became affectionately known was a place of great joy, utter beauty, and priceless family memories. It's where I spent much of my uni holidays, where all the family gatherings were held, where I lived before we built our own home, and it's the home that I brought my 3 children to to spend time with their grandparents. We were there at least 2-3 times every week without fail. It was without question our family hub. On that Friday, things seemed to escalate very quickly. They knew of the bushfire occurring in a neighbouring region, but were a substantial distance away, and felt very 'safe' where they were. By mid morning, my parents had received an evacuation text message. I left work and rushed out to see what the plans</p>

was. But it was very quickly played down by State Forestry, seen to be highly precautionary. They were even told not to waste water hosing anything, after all, we are in a drought! After having some lunch, I left and went home myself. I lived probably 5km or so North as the crow flies. By about 3pm, the frantic phone calls started, mostly from my Mum.

'Dad will just lay some hoses out'

'Your fathers up on the roof hosing'

'It's jumped the highway'

'It's in the grass between the house and the highway now'

'We think the kayaks are gone. I'm so sorry, they were for the boys for Christmas'

'Your brother and I have left, we are sheltering at the petrol station'

'Lucinda, he won't come! He's not leaving, and no one is helping'

'Everything is on fire. You need to call 000, I can't do it. I need to

try and find help here, but please call them' I call 000 for the first time in my life, and hopefully the last. I vividly recall shaking and

not being able to remember his age correctly. 'What does it

matter how old he is' I thought to myself. 'Just someone go and

get him'. The next 20 or so minutes were silent. I couldn't reach

Mum or Dad on their mobiles. And the fixed phone lines were out

across the region, so I couldn't call the petrol station. Then I get a

FaceTime call. From Dad. I was a little perplexed, because my

Dad is notoriously atrocious with technology! But it was him, and

he was alive. He was black, just covered in ash, and I could

barely make out his eyes. I said 'Dad, are you ok?' And all he

could repeat back was 'It's gone, it's all gone'. I then saw

firsthand what he was witnessing. Our family home, literally

burning to the ground. The roof collapsed as we were watching

together, there was no conversation. Just the roaring noise of

flames and crackling. After a while, I just told him that it would all

be ok and that I loved him. But that he needed to leave and head

towards Blackhead where Mum and my Brother had been

escorted to. I know just how long it took them to create that

home. It was quite surreal witnessing just how quickly it could all

be erased. At the same time, my own village was also being

evacuated. I literally stood out the front of my own home,

watching the smoke in the sky from my parents home that had

just burned down. Trying to decide whether to wake my sleeping

babies. We left, thank goodness. And were evacuated for the

best part of 5 days ourselves. The four months since have been

a blur. My parents and brother moved in with us, and stayed for 3

months, because luckily our home survived. Our family of 5

swelled to 8. And amongst the chaos, I know we will look back

longingly on this incredible time of togetherness. We are so

lucky. A shed on their property didn't burn down, and our 22

Galloway cows and 5 chookies survived. We have a few

wallabies and at least one koala left. But I worry for my parents

and brother. Dad hasn't stopped. He is doing so much alone-

there is 7km of fencing to repair, and he has been helping to

renovate the shed for them to live in, arrange contractors, talk to

insurers and banks, chainsaw trees, deal with deceased wildlife.

He is 62, mum is 64. My biggest concern is that our state of NSW

failed the test. This was it. This was our moment to show that we

were prepared, and that the lessons of states prior were not

forgotten. The OEM barely held their heads above water, and

most processes, even now are inadequate. Communication from

all levels was atrocious, often incorrect, inexpedient, and

traumatising when it kept changing. The role of council in this

from the start has been very much 'we have nothing to do with

wellbeing'. This is inherently wrong, and we should be changing

the roles and responsibility of councils in line with VIC. Where are

the emergency housing options? SA had humanihuts. Service

NSW being engaged 3 months after our fires was a complete

afterthought. We should have a case management system in

place at all times. Residents relaying their trauma 30 times over

is disgusting and 3rd world. The disaster welfare hotline records

and the records kept in the Wynter st office recovery assistance point here did not communicate with each other. Staff were in adequately trained. I asked for a formal complaints process and was ignored. I still have not been given one. The mental health supports are disgustingly inadequate. There is no recovery manager. No community development worker. We are pushing for community led recovery, and no one has any information. We have a state organised regional recovery committee, with close to 100% government employees. Essentially every decision and action by NSW has gone against the national recovery principles. Everything needs review, most things need to change. Overall, embarrassed to live in this state. I demand an open, honest conversation with our community about what went wrong, and I demand action to change it for the future.

1.1 Causes and contributing factors

1.2 Preparation and planning

1.3 Response to bushfires

1.4 Any other matters

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