

# TRANSCRIPT

## ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into the CFA training college at Fiskville

Melbourne — 25 May 2015

#### Members

Ms Bronwyn Halfpenny — Chair

Mr Tim McCurdy — Deputy Chair

Mr Brad Battin

Mr Simon Ramsay

Mr Tim Richardson

Ms Vicki Ward

Mr Daniel Young

#### Staff

Executive officer: Dr Greg Gardiner

Research officer: Dr Kelly Butler

#### Witness

Mr Neville Callow.

**Necessary corrections to be notified to  
executive officer of committee**

**The CHAIR** — Welcome, Mr Callow. On behalf of the committee, thank you for coming in today. I just have a few things to say before we hear your presentation. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof transcript very soon.

Following your presentation to us this afternoon committee members will ask questions relating to both your submission and the evidence you will provide to us in a minute. Thank you again for being before us, and we appreciate and look forward to your evidence. Is it okay if we call you Neville or Mr Callow? Which do you prefer?

**Mr CALLOW** — Ned.

**The CHAIR** — Nev?

**Mr CALLOW** — Ned — N-e-d.

**The CHAIR** — Sure.

**Mr CALLOW** — I have a PowerPoint submission, and at any time you want to ask any questions about the photos I put up, just feel free to ask me. I will probably try and explain everything as we go along.

**The CHAIR** — Sure.

**Mr CALLOW** — I have a fair bit of video evidence as well, but I have not been able to put it on a presentation, or whatever you say. If you ever need any more evidence or video stuff, I can supply that later on.

**The CHAIR** — Okay, thank you.

### **Visual presentation.**

**Mr CALLOW** — My name is Neville Callow. I am a past CFA captain, at Rowsley from 1990 to 1994. For the past 12 years I have owned a 92-acre property which adjoins Fiskville, on the south boundary of the Fiskville training centre. It is a little over 100 metres from the hot fire exercise PAD to my boundary. I run 12 stud belted Galloway cattle, which currently have calves at foot, and a bull — in total 25 head. Some of these are the rare red belted Galloway. A bull I bred won first prize at the Melbourne show in 1998. I also have 30 ewes currently, with lambs at foot, totalling 70 sheep all up. There are also two horses on the property.

Over the last 12 years I have had ongoing issues with Fiskville, mostly about smoke and fumes coming across my property. That is a pretty standard picture of when I first moved up there. That could start at, say, 8 o'clock in the morning. By the time they got the fire going it would last a good 20 minutes. The next 20 minutes they would be putting that fire out, and then you would put up with the fumes, and then, on the hour, they would start it again. They probably stopped for an hour at lunchtime. This went all over the weekends, sometimes to 8.30 at night.

The next one is a picture of Ziggy, the guy who bought the Conlan place next door, who was about the third owner after it originally sold from the Maceks. He owned the tyre joint in Bacchus Marsh and he used to supply CFA with the tyres. As well as that, the CFA used to go to his tyre place with their truck and pick a lot more tyres up. That is why the smoke is so black.

Prior to the start of 2014 I had no warning when the black smoke and fumes came across my property. I could be out fencing, working on the cattle, on the tractor, going about my farming routine. When this happened I could move away to another area and would contact Fiskville management and submit a complaint. I also emailed the south-western EPA, WorkSafe and the Moorabool shire health officer on a regular basis over many years. I sent probably four emails to each authority each year over the last 12 years, probably more.

John Bell and Mick Harris were both managers at Fiskville in 2011, and as a result of my complaints I met both managers in my front paddock of my property to discuss how these issues could be resolved. John and Mick agreed with me that the only solution for the CFA to continue hot fire training was to buy my property out so

that a reasonable buffer zone could be established so that personal injury to both people and animals downwind could be minimised. About a week after this discussion took place we met again. They said that they had valued my property at \$525 000 to \$625 000 and offered me \$550 000. Because \$575 000 was halfway between the two figures, I said that I would think about the price. After another week I decided the best for both parties was to accept the lower price of \$550 000.

At this point in time I was prepared to pour a slab for a new house on the property. John and Mick suggested that I did not go ahead and pour the slab for the house as they were 99 per cent sure that the sale would be approved by CFA headquarters. As a result, I delayed pouring the slab. Approximately three weeks later I contacted Mick Harris, who said he had explained the full situation to headquarters in detail to the personnel and what have you and that the request had been refused. That is just a card saying when they tried to call me a few times and missed me. That is a part of the house slab.

In all the 12 years I have owned this property, my family, visitors to the property, including contract workers, have been exposed to black smoke and fumes on a very regular basis. Over the years there have been many communications with a number of bodies relating to the issues at Fiskville, including the following: 24 August 2011, south-west EPA, who said it — the smoke and fumes — was nothing to do with the EPA and suggested the Moorabool shire health officer should put a wind protocol on their permit conditions. Nothing resulted from this. August 2012, WorkSafe said that the Vic Police had ample buffer zone to conduct their explosive training at Fiskville. However, pieces of bomb remains and concrete shrapnel have landed well inside my property — probably over 100 metres inside my property. May 2012, the Moorabool shire planning department reissued the permit to operate with a buffer zone of just over 100 metres to my private property. Yet a piggery or poultry shed requires a 1-kilometre buffer zone just for odour. The CFA should have a buffer zone of at least 5 kilometres.

In September 2011 the Moorabool shire health officer had a meeting with the Fiskville management and said the matter of smoke and fumes is between Fiskville and myself. They have a strategic management policy with emissions control procedures which does not allow any smoke or fumes to cross private property. I was advised by the health officer to start a running sheet of events and contact them after a month, which I did, when they were smoking me out. When I did ring Fiskville, after being smoked out, they would say, 'We will alter our training after lunch', but the same thing would happen the very next day. In the beginning, over the weekends, there was no receptionist; hence we were unable to contact Fiskville and would have to leave the property.

Looking back over the past 12 years I believe I have been bullied and harassed by CFA management. An example of this is in mid-2011 when I had heated discussions with Paul Roughead on the phone and in my front paddock. On one occasion in my front paddock he said, 'We the CFA have been here 20 years. I have 800 volunteers to train. We are the CFA. We can do as we like. No-one can touch us. You are nothing but a nuisance. Why don't you build your house on the other side of the property?'

I have also met with Lex de Man and Justin Justin in my front paddock. Looking back on the notes my partner took at the time of this meeting, Lex de Man said, 'Don't send me any more emails. Contact me directly when the smoke occurs'. I did this, and the training would be changed for the day, but the same thing would happen the very next day, so I gave up, feeling that I was being fobbed off. I still have no replies to emails I sent Lex de Man over three months ago asking just basic questions. They were: has adjoining land been contaminated? Can you please test my soil and my tank water? Just basic questions like that, which I have not had a reply to.

In February 2015, just gone by, I erected signs on my property as a response to the parliamentary inquiry which was due to come out to view where the hot fire training took place. My intention with the sign was to bring awareness to how close private property was to the hot fire PAD exercises. That is the sign I put up there on the front of my backhoe, at the back of my place, and I just drove it up near the fence line so you could look straight across. It also reflected my ongoing frustration with the smoke and fumes. I received a letter from James Dullard, putting me on notice that I was to remove the sign immediately or proceedings would commence in the Supreme Court.

On 26 November 2013 I saw Martin Boehner, facilities manager at Fiskville, over the boundary fence when toxic smoke and fumes had just passed over my property. I called him over and asked him if he could smell the fumes. His response was, 'Yes, I can, but I don't find them offensive'. I also asked if he could organise a new fence, for which I was prepared to pay half, along our boundary. This has never eventuated. That shows the better part of the fence between their place and my place.

Over the years my family and I, as well as my livestock, have suffered ongoing health issues. I have lost cattle as a result of them eating the plastic and the polystyrene blown onto my property from Fiskville, and you can see that shows just a small example of the plastic that I used to have to go around once or twice a week just to pull it off the fence. I sold a young cow to a local, and it died six months later, full of cancer. I have lost two newly born calves as a result of explosives training. A horse I had on agistment had the hair burnt off the top of its body as a result of acid rain. My property was littered with concrete shrapnel and pieces of bomb as a result of their explosive training. You can see the bits of concrete there and — I don't know; whatever they are. You can see my tractor and little bits spread right across the back of my place, and the trees over the back are just the start of the Fiskville boundary.

My property has been covered in foam from their hot fire training. You can see in the picture there a circle on the top, which is not that clear. It is the guy squirting the foam onto the fire. The foam is actually being lifted straight up the side of the shed, coming across, and in the paddock just in front of me are a couple of real little bits, but most of it was landing behind me, just like it was snowing. My only source of drinking water, which is collected in a large tank from my shed, I believe has been polluted by the smoke and fumes crossing my private property. There is my shed and the tank catching the water, and that is just the start of one of their training exercises for the day — a line of smoke across my place.

Whilst building my machinery shed and large water storage tank, and whilst in the process of building my house, I have been severely affected by the toxic smoke and fumes, which have resulted in nodules on my lungs. I have got four small nodules on my left-hand side here. I am currently under a respiratory specialist in Footscray. My PSA blood count has been affected, and I am under a urologist up in Ballarat. I have also had a biopsy done, and I have not got prostate cancer as yet. I also have other medical complaints being currently investigated. The other Friday night I ended up with severe dizziness and a severe headache on the left-hand side of my head. I ended up in the Ballan hospital, which sent me by ambulance up to Ballarat. They could not work out what it was. My blood pressure was over 200, but after they gave me a painkilling injection in the stomach it settled down, and I have still got to get scans done on my head.

On one particular occasion I had six contractors installing the tin on the machinery shed roof. When the smoke and fumes came across the shed, the smoke was so toxic that it blocked off the workers' airways and gave them massive headaches across the front of their head, resulting in the work having to cease. Because they were so affected they could not get down off the roof via the ladders. We were very lucky that I was on the ground. I got my backhoe and lifted the bucket up to the roof height, and we lowered them down two at a time. That is how bad the smoke is and how badly it actually affects you.

On another occasion, in August 2011, when I have a plumber and his apprentice and a backhoe driver installing the plumbing in the slab of the house, smoke came over. All were affected, with blocked airways and — exactly the same; severe headaches at the front of the head. All had to leave the property after recovering enough to get into their vehicles.

My daughter had never experienced asthma before I purchased this property; however, since being at Fiskville, she has had many episodes. In one instance, on 12 May 2013, after heavy black smoke caught us unawares, I had to call 000 because we were both affected that badly I was unable to connect the spacer to my daughter's ventilator — puffer. In desperation I rang 000 and was advised by the ambulance that it was at least 30 minutes away.

**The CHAIR** — Take your time. It is okay if you want to have a pause for a second.

**Mr CALLOW**— Yes. By this time the smoke was subsiding, and I was able to assist her. We both were able to get in the car and leave the area. My daughter, who is in year 10, is also suffering from unspecified and ongoing fatigue. Just this term alone she has had seven days off. Pieces of unsecured tin sheets from Fiskville have been known to fly into my property during windstorms, posing risks to humans and animals. Some time ago I asked Fiskville management and the Moorabool health officer to attend to this, which they have never addressed. You can see in the photo — the bottom one on the right is when I first complained. Their answer was to put the big drum on top to stop the tin from flying across into my place, and there it is stacked up on our boundary fence. Soot is visible on all the fence wiring on my property. The ongoing anxiety and stress to my family takes its toll on everyday life. An example of this ongoing stress can be found in an extract from the independent Fiskville investigation, June 2012, by Rob Joy.

In concluding, I am astounded at the amount of government money that has been spent at Fiskville to try to fix the contamination of the site. I have witnessed earthmoving equipment removing perceived contaminated topsoil which has been stockpiled along the southern boundary in a waterway, a known flood area, that has already started to wash into adjoining properties, and that is Matty Lloyd's property. You can see that the top left-hand picture is where they have scraped the contaminated topsoil off. The bottom left-hand picture — I am on the corner of my place, and that is Matty's place to the left. You can see the stockpile of contaminated soil put on the boundary there. Just down the end of that is where it is all starting to wash into his place. You can also see on the right-hand bottom corner how deep they have dug into the ground. That is a 50-tonne rock breaker that was going for months and months, breaking through the bedrock. Whatever was contaminated on the top now will definitely be going down into the watertable.

The other ridiculous thing is that every time I went down there — I used to stand on the top of my old tractor and hold up my iPhone and take these pictures — work would stop immediately. You can see down the bottom left-hand corner the little white ute on the fence line. Everything would shut down. He would go and pick up the guys out of the thing and they would stop work until I disappeared. I have good video evidence of the amount of dust and stuff blowing onto Matty Lloyd's and my place. It was just ridiculous when they were doing that.

In doing the earthworks they broke through the bedrock, which will now allow any pollution on the surface to be washed down into the watertable. I believe that the 44-gallon drums that contained toxic chemicals that were buried in the early 70s have not been removed, tested or disposed of. I have had recent conversations with the person who buried them.

It is my opinion that Fiskville is totally unsuitable for hot fire training because the hot fire PAD and other fire activities are located on the southernmost boundary with a little over 100 metres of buffer zone, which is totally unacceptable. That is because 70 per cent of the wind comes from the north-west and blows straight across my property and Matty's place and blows off the Fiskville site. Also, the run-off from the training PAD enters holding dams which flood into a known waterway. This is a high rainfall area and surrounding properties are directly affected by this.

In my last correspondence to the CEOs and the planning and health department of the Moorabool shire in 2015 I vented my frustration. As part of a long letter I wrote:

Maybe the buffer zone, the security fencing, the duty of care, the risk management assessment, the Nuisance Act 2008, the strategic management policy with emissions control procedures that outlines the management of potential smoke drift by considering wind speed and direction, has been overlooked by all authorities.

The only person who I believe has listened and acted on any of these issues I have experienced is Geoff Howard, the MP who raised the issues of Fiskville in Parliament. My understanding was that Minister Wells took a long time to reply — nine months in fact — which was a very tardy response to such a huge issue.

Last week I contacted the CFA helpline to ask the CFA if they could arrange a blood test for heavy metals and PFOS as soon as possible. I received a phone call from Andrew at the CFA on either Thursday or Friday last week who said he would email me an application form immediately, but I still have not received this email as yet.

This inquiry has been a long time coming, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to finally have a voice and to be heard.

**The CHAIR** — Thanks, Ned, that was a really good presentation. I think it gave us a lot of information. Can I just clarify something? We heard from the Lloyds last week and from other people who have given evidence that the CFA has provided testing of soil and water, for example, on the Lloyds' property. There has also been ongoing health checks for people going back a number of years. I am surprised. I think you were saying that there has been no testing of your property and you have asked for it.

**Mr CALLOW** — Yes.

**The CHAIR** — Did they give you a reason why not? What happened there?

**Mr CALLOW** — No, they just will not reply to the emails. That was in the last email I sent to Lex de Man probably three months ago. I re-asked to get soil tests, plant tissue tests done, because I have good video

evidence of it covering my sheds. You can wipe the soot off the shed, so it has got to be in the water supply. Maybe that is why me and my daughter have got so many health issues.

**The CHAIR** — You are on tank water to the house?

**Mr CALLOW** — Tank water. That is the only water supply available; that is right.

**The CHAIR** — In terms of your livestock, you have probably heard also that for the Lloyds there was also the issue with the Department of Primary Industries. Has anybody been across to test any of your livestock to see whether there are any contaminants?

**Mr CALLOW** — No.

**The CHAIR** — Are you breeding animals, or do you actually — —

**Mr CALLOW** — Yes, that is right. We breed stud animals. With the sheep, killers and run a few extras off to market.

**The CHAIR** — You have bulls that are —

**Mr CALLOW** — That is it.

**The CHAIR** — for breeding. And you have sheep for meat?

**Mr CALLOW** — That is it. Same with the cattle. We eat some of the steers and run the rest to market to pay the rates and stuff. The young kids are probably interested in showing them again, but I have not got the set-up yet.

**Mr McCURDY** — Ned, clearly you probably have not got a great relationship with the CFA as your neighbour.

**Mr CALLOW** — No.

**Mr McCURDY** — Clearly that is the case. I am more interested or concerned with the EPA and the Moorabool shire.

**Mr CALLOW** — Disgraceful.

**Mr McCURDY** — Was there an initial reaction early on when you first approached them and got some benefit out of them, or have they just refused point blank right from the word go? Or is it just something over time they have just chosen to ignore you?

**Mr CALLOW** — No, the EPA in Geelong just basically fobbed me off and said that it has got nothing to do with them. ‘We will suggest to the Moorabool shire to put on a wind protocol’, because they are the ones who issued the permit for the CFA to operate. Under that permit there are meant to be conditions, but I wrote a letter asking what conditions there were, and they said, ‘You have got to use the freedom of information’. It costs I think \$147 or something to access them. Initially the Moorabool shire were not too bad — —

**Mr McCURDY** — Going back how far?

**Mr CALLOW** — Probably three years ago. In the end they just do not want to know about it, you know what I mean? I do a running sheet — smoked out today, with the date, what type of smoke, what colour and all that type of stuff. The same the next day. I say I have complained and what have you. Eventually she had a meeting with the CFA management, but they said it really has got nothing to do with them. They have their strategic management plan. Basically the CFA is a law unto themselves; they just do what they want. What can you do? You can only complain about the same thing so many times and send the same email over and over. I do not know; I give up.

I know Michael Tugwell from the years when I was a captain at Rowsley. I still know him fairly well now. He is on the board of the CFA. Anything that probably comes up in the Moorabool shire, as he is a past mayor and councillor, is pretty much rubber stamped, if you know what I mean.

**Mr RICHARDSON** — Thanks, Ned, for coming in and detailing your story. Just to touch on the Lloyds, given their proximity to you and the revelations last week that they would have 30 times the level of PFOS that is deemed safe, what are your thoughts on that? What is your frustration at this point in dealing with the CFA in that matter?

**Mr CALLOW** — I really could not believe it. I knew that there has been something going on there, but because Matty leased the lands around Fiskville and he used it — he needs it for his income, for running sheep and what have you — even though he was a really good friend he would just basically say, ‘Ned, you’re doing such a good job; keep at it’, you know what I mean. So I would get it out in the open, that it is not right. I just could not believe that his place has been so contaminated, and his stock. Because if his is, my property is closer — you can see in the photos — so you would have to be pretty sure that mine are the same.

**Mr RICHARDSON** — Getting to the offer that was made initially for your property, when did that transpire? What year was it that that took place?

**Mr CALLOW** — I think it was about 2011, somewhere around then.

**Mr RICHARDSON** — It was a similar sort of circumstance to what the Lloyds face as well, with the buying out of stock. How did that process come about and what has been the contact subsequently?

**Mr CALLOW** — Buying the land or the stock?

**Mr RICHARDSON** — Buying your land.

**Mr CALLOW** — John Bell and Mick Harris, they were pretty good managers. They understood they had a fair problem. They knew what they had to do, and they also put in that small plantation to try to stop the smoke. When I spoke to them, they said, ‘Look, we’ve fully explained to headquarters. They know exactly what’s going on. We really can’t do any training because 70 per cent of the time the wind’s blowing across private property’ — and if you take in Matty’s place, probably 80 per cent of the time, so basically they cannot do any training. Obviously they were transferred pretty much straight after that. Then they have put in other managers who were basically bullies and said, ‘Don’t take no crap from the neighbours; just do what you’ve got to do’.

They initiated it. I did not come up with the figure. In fact you can see by their calling card they called around a few times. By then the house slab was just starting and I had got a shed behind a cypress hedge. In actual fact they used to try to chase me up and say, ‘This is what we’ve got to do’. It was not me chasing them, saying, ‘I need you to buy me out’ or anything like that.

With the Collins’ property next door, originally it was 102 acres and the Maceks — Paul has been really crook, and his brother and his wife and daughter and what have you — have actually moved to Cairns now. They are not on the cancer list or whatever. They had a lot of trouble selling the place as one, so that is why they split it up. I was not interested in the house at that stage; I just wanted the land. Then the Maceks sold it to a lady who lasted less than six months, her and her kids, in that house, because of the smoke and stuff, I assume. They moved on. They actually made a profit — a 50 grand profit. Then Ziggy bought the place, the tyre man in Bacchus Marsh. He was doing a good business because it costs you 5 bucks a tyre to get rid of, and then he had a good way to off-load them, so with each truckload he was making a good deal. So he stayed there for a while. Then out of the blue he had some sort of arrangement with the CFA and they bought him out and he moved on — and he got a good price, too, at the time. I think it was 480 or 580 or something, which was pretty good for that type of property. There is still someone living in the house now. The CFA gardener is still living there now, on the CFA property.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I have just a couple of questions in relation to the impact of the smoke particularly — but we will talk about water as well — to your property. Do you live on the property yourself?

**Mr CALLOW** — Pretty much half the time. I was getting a fair bit of stuff stolen from the house site, so I have got an old caravan in the shed and we camp there most of the week. My sister lives in Ballan and we go there if we need to and what have you. So pretty much every weekend and most nights of the week.

**Mr RAMSAY** — How do you capture water?

**Mr CALLOW** — We have got taps and a hot water supply there and all that sort of stuff. It is like a little bit of a man cave there. You pretty much have to drink the water there, although in the last two years I have been buying bottled water because I am pretty much sure that the water is contaminated. So we drink bottled water, but if we have to have a wash and stuff we use all the other water.

**Mr RAMSAY** — I am not suggesting that the CFA is not at fault in relation to past practices, and we have heard plenty of testimony to say that they have been, but when you purchased your property 10 years ago — —

**Mr CALLOW** — Twelve years ago — a bit more now; I think 13.

**Mr RAMSAY** — The testimony we have heard here is that going back to the 80s and 90s there has been a lot of training activity that used to include a lot of smoke and toxic fumes. I guess you have bought into a property that is adjacent to a training facility that has had a history of training activity that includes smoke and other things, so I guess it was the buyer beware at that stage, the fact that you had a neighbour that was a training facility.

**Mr CALLOW** — I probably did not live on the place then and I was just mainly interested in somewhere for my cattle to go, whether it was grass or twice the rainfall from 15 minutes down the road from where I lived. I knew they put up smoke, but I did not realise how intense and how often it happened.

**Mr RAMSAY** — That may be understandable, coming into a new property. On the offer that was made, I understand there is documentation and that there has been a lot of correspondence over a period of time in relation to offers to purchase your property. Has that been unsuccessful because they have not offered market value or not offered the price you want?

**Mr CALLOW** — Purely because it was knocked back by headquarters, as far as I am aware. Actually, since then, Lex de Man, after we met in the front paddock, they wanted to buy me out again and I think they got some valuers in and valued it at about 300 grand or something like that, which was a long way short of what it was years earlier, so it was just a waste of time. I was not even interested.

**Mr RAMSAY** — They actually did not make any offer to the Lloyds in relation to land purchase; it was only stock purchase, as we understood.

**Mr CALLOW** — Yes, that is right.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Do you know if any other neighbours have been offered purchases of land adjacent?

**Mr CALLOW** — No.

**Mr RAMSAY** — My understanding is there are 300 acres within the boundary of Fiskville itself. I find it interesting that they put a fire PAD at the very end, closest to the road and community. Why not put it somewhere within the whole 300 acres that creates a significant buffer?

**Mr CALLOW** — Exactly.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Someone will explain that to me down the track, I guess. In relation to your issue, is your preference now, given there might well be some options, to look at selling the property?

**Mr CALLOW** — No, not anymore. I have spent too much time building this house. It is state of the art. I am not going anywhere. They have contaminated it; they will be cleaning it up. They have had their opportunity. They could have bought the neighbour's place and owned the whole corner, right down to Hamills Lane, if they wanted to, initially. They would have got all of it for under \$1 million — a lot cheaper than spending 17.

**Mr RAMSAY** — My last question is: were you offered any testing of your livestock, like the Lloyds were?

**Mr CALLOW** — No, nothing yet, no.

**Mr RAMSAY** — So you do not know if your stock are contaminated, then?

**Mr CALLOW** — No.



**Mr RAMSAY** — Do you know if your waterways are contaminated?

**Mr CALLOW** — No.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Do you know what the contamination of the smoke is? You talked about toxic smoke that was impacting on your livability on the property: do you know what that toxicity is?

**Mr CALLOW** — No idea. You can tell pretty much what they are burning. If it is tyres, it is super black. That is probably not so bad — it is bad enough — but when you get that plastic polystyrene, when they are burning mattresses, pillows or whatever they do, that is deadly. Two whiffs and it blocks your airway off and you get that severe across the front. If you do not get out of that smoke pretty much straightaway, you have had it.

**Mr RAMSAY** — That is current CFA practice, is it?

**Mr CALLOW** — They have actually reduced the smoke over the last probably three years and tried to minimise the amount of time between when they light it and put it out. Then they have said all these other excuses, ‘Oh, we only burn grass hay and all this sort of stuff’, but you can tell that if you wet grass hay and put it out, you are never going to light it again unless you put more diesel, petrol or some other accelerant on it to really get it going again. Do you know what I mean? I realise they have got to do training, but the set-up there — it is too late. They need to set up a new facility somewhere else and do it properly.

**Ms WARD** — Hi, Ned. Thank you for your submission. You have had the property for 12 years. How long have you been communicating with the CFA regarding your concerns, and how do you think that that communication has been managed by the CFA?

**Mr CALLOW** — You could not contact them on a weekend, because there were no receptionists, and that is when they do most of their training. But when you do ring up, you get, ‘Oh, not you again. What are you complaining about now?’. I say, ‘Listen, I’m not putting up with this smoke or fumes any longer. You’ve got to do something about it. Stop putting it over — full stop’. Then in the end I just give up ringing. Then I send the odd email off to headquarters and stuff like that.

**Ms WARD** — You sent the email to CFA head office, not to Fiskville?

**Mr CALLOW** — Yes. I sent quite a few off to them. You get the reply, ‘We’ve been there for so long and we have to do some sort of training’. I think it is in my submission, the correspondence I have had with the CFA.

**Ms WARD** — In your view, how do you think the executive management at the CFA and at Fiskville have managed your concerns?

**Mr CALLOW** — Terrible. It is a disgrace. Like they say, they do what they like when they want and just continue doing it. It must go right to the top. It must go even past headquarters, because headquarters know exactly what is going on and they must tell the manager at Fiskville, ‘Fob him off. Do whatever. Keep doing what you’ve got to do. We’ve got to get these trainees trained, that’s it, at all costs’, which is just ridiculous.

**Ms WARD** — The Lloyds seem to have had more extensive conversations with the CFA in terms of their case. Simon mentioned buying sheep and media assistance and so on. You do not seem to have had those same conversations. Is that right?

**Mr CALLOW** — No. Because Matty leases the land around there he has had contact with them — I do not know who, but some of the CFA personnel. He would have had contact with one of them, probably not the manager but there would be someone else there he had pretty close contact with all the time. ‘I’m going to plough up this side of Fiskville this week. I’m going to do this or going to do that.’ They would have had some sort of pretty cordial conversations, whereas every time I have had to contact Fiskville management it is always complaining. What can you do? You can only do it so often. After a while you just give up. Because it has affected my daughter — the main thing is my daughter — that is no good.

**The CHAIR** — Can I ask you a quick one before we end? You were talking about bullying and intimidation. Is that just in terms of not answering your emails, or have there been any specific incidents?

**Mr CALLOW** — With Paul Roughead, after that smoke was there I was pretty irate, and I got on the phone. It was probably my fault initially, I would have threatened him and what have you and been pretty vocal. It would have been pretty heated. That was when the other meetings came along.

**The CHAIR** — Thanks for coming in to see us today.

**Mr CALLOW** — No worries. If there any more videos or pictures that you want, I have heaps and heaps.

**The CHAIR** — Thanks for that. We will be in touch if we need anything. Thank you.

**Witness withdrew.**