

## **Draft**

### **Subject: Systemic Issues with the local fires to address**

#### **Prefire control**

The fires should not have occurred particularly of the scale they did. The policy of ignoring local knowledge and prioritizing other values over avoiding a catastrophic fire needs to be addressed as a priority. Numerous examples exist of property owners not being permitted to conduct controlled burns in some cases years before this fire, the values being purported to be protected (plants and eagles nests) have now gone.

The initial response was not serious enough or managed well. Confusion around WHA fires needs to be formally resolved. Back burns were reportedly left unattended by TFS staff further exacerbating the fires.

#### **Central Highlands Councils response**

The evacuation process seems to have been first rate however in my view the availability of plant and staff should have been much more proactive. It obviously need to be done with TFS supervision

The financial burden placed on councils should be shared.

The marshaling of resources must be much more proactive with the council emergency response staff given clear direction to notify the fire authorities each time an event occurs what physical resources the council has available

Helicopter access insurance issues with councils state wide needs to be provided, this has been going on for 8 months.

#### **Local knowledge**

In the recent fires a lack of local knowledge was a serious impediment and produced poor outcomes and risked lives and property.

TFS staff must only take holidays during the winter months as was previously the policy.

The TFS staff and organization must be sensitive to volunteers. Assets removed from volunteer units creates poor moral. The volunteer units and resources should not be reduced as has happened in Bothwell as the volunteers lose heart if not supported by TFS staff

One unit removed another down sized

#### **Broader consultation**

Liaison with all potential parties not just volunteers and affected land owners also farms with units and stockmen, council, any other businesses or individuals with resources

Ongoing all of year communication should be reinstated between property owners and TFS

The controlled burning policy must be adaptable

### **Access to the fire ground**

This has been the major problem with poor communication and poor implementation

Lives put at risk : examples young women with babies not prepared to leave the fire area

People with livestock or requirement for medication particularly the elderly won't leave because no simple process from quick entry

Must be sorted!!

While well intentioned it's not working

Could easily be addressed by showing a drivers licence to display residency to gain access is all that's required

Risk should be accepted by parties wishing access to feed livestock etc

During the Bothwell end of the Miena fire, additional assets were requested by the local incident controller, land owners left their properties to provide additional support but were prevented from accessing the fire ground as it had been deemed too dangerous to enter. This left the volunteers in the fire more exposed and without back up putting their lives at risk and leaving very frustrated volunteers watching the fire approaching and not being able to support their family, neighbors and staff. fire, trucks for evacuation etc.

### **Communications**

Need to be statewide and improved

Temporary comms set up for phone access on the fire ground for radio as well

More providers share existing towers

### **Devolution to local TFS management**

Needs to be simpler and done at the local level by the trained people on the fire front

Back burn example: managed from Launceston, submit a plan, travel to reception to send in , then a study on each burn is done then get message back

Where there is reception

Crazy stuff!! Ground conditions may have changed

### **Local resources management**

Coordinate and train farm units plus help with maintenance and checking in good order

There needs to be a budget for this

OHS issues with farm and council staff could be dealt with through legislation plus up skilling with out of season training (insurance etc are big employer issues)

Sale of TFS equipment to be promoted to local farmers and businesses

### **Asset prioritization and lack of skill by TFS management**

The city based TFS has no idea of the asset values in bush fires. Millions of dollars' worth of timber and livestock were abandoned to concentrate on built assets worth a fraction of the value and many were protected by irrigation and cleared areas in any event

The containment lines did not recognize the values nor were physical breaks prepared as fall back positions quickly enough. The urban based fire service must be upskilled to actually fight bush fires not grass fires.

**The TFS policy of not fighting fires in the bush or at night must be rectified**