HUON RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT GROUP INC.
Supporting resource-based industries in the Huon region, and the residents who depend upon them

3 May 2019

Submission to Independent Review into 2018-19 bushfires

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The Huon Resource Development Group Inc. (HRDG) seeks to make a submission to this review.

Executive Summary

- Members of the HRDG applaud the efforts of the firefighters on the ground, in the air and in control rooms in making every effort to save lives, buildings, and community infrastructure and assets.
- The Group acknowledges and thanks the volunteers and government officials in their support to individuals, family and community members adversely impacted by the fires.
- We are concerned that the change in land tenure, particularly the introduction and expansion of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the increases in conservation reserves since the 1967 southern Tasmanian bushfires has adversely impacted on the State’s ability to plan and effectively conduct firefighting operations.
- We are concerned at media reporting and claims from lobbyists and activist academics that the 2018-19 fires are the “new normal” caused by Anthropogenic (man-made) Global Warming.
- Members are concerned that there is still widespread misunderstanding in the community on the need for fuel reduction burning, and other mitigation measures as renewable biomass energy from forest harvesting residues for the beneficial reduction in fire intensity.
- The Group submits that the Government needs to increase the inventory of firefighting assets to include larger capacity firefighting aircraft, and modern ground based machinery, as well as maintaining access roads, fire trails and a sufficiently large paid and volunteer force of trained and experienced fire fighters.
- The Group recommends that no more reservation of fire prone forest be made, and that internal buffer zones be created to mitigate wild fire escapes from wilderness areas. These buffer zones must be subject to effective forest management, including access roads, fire breaks, evacuation points and safe havens as well as fuel reduction burnings. That payment for this management be contributed by royalties from the harvesting of timber in these buffer zones in a manner recommended by forest ecologists, scientists, and accredited forest managers.
- That the management of the TWWHA be amended and improved to ensure proper wildfire mitigation is in place before each annual fire season, in order to reduce the risk of loss or damage to freehold property downwind of the TWWHA, and to reduce the risk of death or injury to property owners.
Introduction

Our group has a focus on supporting developments in the Huon Valley based on the sound management of our natural resources. Our Mission Statement supports progressive development in the Huon Valley through democratic representation at all levels of Government to ensure a vibrant and sustainable community.

The Huon Valley has a proud tradition of sustainable management of our natural resources including agriculture, fishing and forestry.

Key industries in the region include forestry, agriculture, aquaculture and tourism. Ta Ann operates a timber mill at Geeveston. Fruit and wine are key contributors to the agriculture industry. Aquaculture is a growing industry with major companies Huon Aquaculture and Tassal both operating in the region. Major tourist attractions include the Tahune Airwalk and Hastings Caves. The Huon Valley municipal area covers 5,497 square kilometres.

The township of Huonville is approximately 30 minutes south of Hobart. The population of 15,000 of the municipality is spread across the five main townships of Huonville, Franklin, Cygnet, Geeveston and Dover.

The beginning of our timber heritage is recorded as a back drop to the historical novel Hearts of Oak, (1990), by Bill Leitch. The history of Tasmanian industry, including forestry, is a story of innovation and efforts mitigating the impacts of bushfire. For forestry this was based upon our native timbers from residential and construction timber, industrial applications such as apple boxes, boat building and fine furniture to pulp and paper, yet despite this record of innovation the region’s timber industry has been beset by conflict as a result of the increasing political power of the environmental movement since the 1970’s.

Tasmania’s Forests

Tasmania’s magnificent environment is a mosaic of both fire prone and fire dependent vegetation. We form part of the driest and most fire-hazardous country in the world. Our fire seasons, higher rainfall in certain areas and the fertility of the soil contribute heavier concentrations of ground fuels than in other parts of Australia. It has also contributed to Tasmania a landscape patchwork of tall wet forests, rain forests, drier shorter forest and flammable button grass plains.

It is the forests that provide unique Tasmanian timbers that have become renown throughout the world as our master craftsman, timber workers, boat builders and other artisans have showcased their beauty and utility. The forests have supplied the timber that has built homes, and provided the fibre for newsprint and paper products essential to a modern society.

Sixty million years ago, Tasmania was connected to mainland Australia, South America and Antarctica, and the climate was wet, cool and constant. Tasmania was covered in dense rainforests.

As Australia broke away from this landmass and became an island, it drifted north into a warmer climate zone – the land became drier, rainfall became seasonal rather than continuous, extremes of temperature began to occur, and fire became prevalent during warm, dry seasons.

Bushfires are usually seen purely as a disaster or a tragedy. However, they have also had a vital role to play in the regeneration, growth and health of Tasmania’s natural environment for millions of years.

Lightning has ignited world forests for at least 300 million years and temperate rainforests and eucalypts had fuelled and been regenerated by bushfires for more than 60 million and 12 million years respectively. The rot-resistant eucalypt fuels increased fire frequency and their stringy and candle barks increased fire spread. By 40,000 years ago wet and mixed forest eucalypts had evolved a complete dependence on fire at 20 to 400 year intervals for their natural regeneration.

With every ice age the sea level and most forests retreated downhill but still burnt often enough to regularly regenerate all of today’s fire dependent species. Temperatures and sea level rose about 10,000 years ago and each vegetation type climbed back onto whatever sites it needed on today’s island - in spite of First
Tasmanian’s fires.

Writings and paintings by the early European explorers found the first Tasmanians were expert in fire use. This use has been documented by Bill Gammage in his book ‘The Largest Estate on Earth’. Gammage noted the fact that in 1788 there was no wilderness, but a landscape that reflected a sophisticated, successful and sensitive farming regime integrated across the Australian landmass. Fire was not an indiscriminate tool of fuel reduction or grass promotion, but carefully employed to ensure certain plants and animals flourished, to facilitate access and rotation, and to ensure resources were abundant, convenient and predictable.

Tasmania has faced a series of devastating fires from early settlement in 1803. The Reverend Knopwood recorded in his diary on Boxing Day 1806 that “the Country all on fire”. The new settlers were not used to the summer conditions which caused fire to spread quickly. Unlike the Aboriginals who were able to use fire and see it as a beneficial tool, the new settlers saw wild fire as the destroyer.

European trained foresters also had difficulty initially understanding the impact of fire on our forest ecology, however with the increase of investment in the forest sector between the 1930’s and 1970’s saw forests science establish the need for active management of our forests and a greater understanding of the role played by fire in regenerating and shaping our forests.

Wet and mixed forest eucalypts depend on fire at 20 to 400 year intervals for their regeneration. Bushfires in these forests gave Tasmania the World’s tallest hardwoods like in the Styx Valley. Does putting such fires out now, mean that we will never again see a new generation of tall trees?

We have seen many large fires at intervals of a few decades that have been landscape-altering in the areas covered by the tall, wet eucalypt forests and the drier eucalypt forests that have provided the valuable saw logs sought by the saw mills over the last 150 years. This has led in many cases to superb regrowth, and some of the regrowth forests have been harvested for a second and third time. We have been processing some superb saw logs that regenerated after the 1967 fires, as well as that from the large fires in the 1930’s and the 1890’s. While green shoots are appearing already from the 2018-19 fires, we should take comfort from the fact that in 50 years from now there will be superb saw logs potentially available and no further lock-up aspirations should be allowed to prevent that, especially in a carbon-conscious world.

We should be embracing the fact that trees sequester and store carbon, and this transfer into durable products such as buildings, furniture, wooden boats, musical instruments, utensils, and even books, and wherever timber can be substituted for materials of a more carbon-harmful nature, should be a positively discriminated choice. It has been shown that buildings represent a far greater contribution to carbon emissions, especially when life cycle use is included, (e.g. cost and consequence of heating and cooling), and that is where greater use of timber in substitution for concrete, steel, aluminium and plastics gives such an opportunity. This point is so eloquently made in the following TED Talk:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi_PD5aZT7Q

World Heritage

Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) was first inscribed in 1982 which was 769,355 ha in size and included 83% of all Wilderness on the Island. The area included the Dam site – Gordon below Franklin and thus leading to the 1983 High Court ruling that the Commonwealth's external relations powers gave it the right to prevent the flooding of the Franklin, notwithstanding Tasmania's constitutional land use rights.

This ruling has manifested itself in a flurry of inquiries and ‘agreements’ starting with the Helsham inquiry and its overturning that resulted in a massive extension of the World Heritage Area, the Regional Forest Agreement in 2005, and the latest being the Tasmanian Forest Agreement in 2013. The claims of the greens have decimated the Huon Valley’s timber industry, together with the loss of trained and experienced employees, contractors and equipment to fight bush fires.
Media reports of large wildfire identified at the Gell River in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area have included claims that this is the “new normal” due to human instigated climate change caused by emissions of carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution.

Yet there is a more likely reason why we have more fires in the World Heritage Area, and that is we now have more land and fire prone vegetation with this WHA status.

When the wilderness was first inscribed in 1982 by UNESCO it was 769,355 ha in size. Then in 1989 a massive controversial and politically motivated extension was made to the area and more additions made in 2010, 2012 and 2013, doubling the area for a total of 1,584,233 ha.

![Figure 1 1982 and 1989 extension TWWHA showing 2018 fire](image)

Such massive areas designated as wilderness means that to meet such a definition there is a need for the removal of infrastructure or it stop its use to access these areas.

In a recent publication of the Bob Brown Foundation it was advocated that the TWWHA contain areas where there is the potential for rewilding: that is, where the removal of infrastructure (such as the closure of vehicle tracks) or the rehabilitation of disturbed ground would significantly increase the area of wilderness. Such rehabilitation has been funded recently by Federal Government grants to environmental lobby groups and by the Parks and Wildlife Service. Removing access roads makes it fa more difficult to gain access for ground based firefighting crews and machinery as well as to maintain escape routes and defendable spaces.

The Greens have also been quick to blame a lack of immediate response to fight the fire in the wilderness, as they did in 2016 for another fire at Lake MacKenzie (a lake created by a hydro dam). At the same time the greens maintain their opposition to ground based machinery such as bulldozers. Even when Lake McKenzie, was threatened, no machinery was brought in via the hydro road to contain the fire!
Then there is debate over World Heritage Wilderness management, do you allow fuel reduction burns or fire breaks in pristine wilderness, should you even fight the inevitable bushfire in an area that should be in a natural state.

The world heritage area now covers many areas that were not considered wilderness at the time of the original nomination in 1982. Some of these areas include former timber harvesting sites, mining towns and other evidence of recent industry including hydro dams and resultant infrastructure and manmade lakes.

Increase in conservation reserves

Not only as World Heritage dramatically increased in size so to has there been a massive change in land tenure with the creation of conservation reserves since the 1967 bush fires. Tasmania now has a terrestrial reserved area is 3,428,000 hectares, or 50.3% of the area of the State. This representation dramatically shows the increase in reservation of Tasmania’s land. Reserves are now the responsibility of the taxpayer via the State and Federal Government.

Change in land tenure has brought result change in responsibility and in resources, especially in fire
management and fire fighting ability and strategy.

The change from productive forest available for multiple uses including income generating timber harvesting to conservation reserves has also resulted in other changes that are relevant to this inquiry on the fire response. Forestry Tasmania and its predecessors had a motivated and well trained workforce of staff that had a financial vested interest in fighting fires. This workforce was supported by contractors and machinery that could be readily deployed to fight a fire as soon as such a bush fire was detected.

In 2006 Forestry Tasmania had 548 employees and 1,372 contractors and their employees, the vast majority trained and skilled in firefighting. In its 2017-18 Annual report its successor Sustainable Timber Tasmania reported a headcount of only 149 staff members, whilst the number of employees of contractors is not stated, it is believed that the similar massive reduction in numbers would have occurred due to the funding programs of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement for contractors to exit the industry.

In 2017/18, 3 bushfires were attended, at a cost of $1.2 million by STT staff, compared to 113 fires attended at a cost of $5 million in 2003-04.

The resultant land tenure has meant that modern machinery and trained firefighters are no longer available in the same quantity to the production forest manager. Whilst there has been some transfer to the Parks and Wildlife Agency, this transfer has not maintained the same level of both machinery and people capable of assisting in a fire fighting role.

The devastation of the 2019 Tasmanian bushfires, and their predecessors, puts paid to the Greens’ theory of protecting endangered species’ habitats’ creating and reserving wilderness areas and countermands, overturns and demonstrates the obvious flaw that land tenure does not offer protection.

The protection of endangered species’ habitats is only attainable and achievable if access roads and firebreaks in fire prone areas are maintained.

Increasing reservation has meant a loss of income from areas previously allocated for forestry, mining or hydro electricity renewable energy. This income has now been replaced by funding from the taxpayer. Such a change has seen different priorities established in the allocation of resources, including resources for fire mitigation, preparedness and fire fighting capacity.
Gell River

This fire started on 28th December 2018. By the 4th January a watch an act alert was issued for Maydena and nearby towns. By this stage the fire was difficult to control and the response by the Parks and Wildlife and Tas Fire Service was now being criticised by environmentalists and public sector unions, but no mention that the area should never have been locked up in the first place. This was a political deal by ALP's Bob Hawke and Graham Richardson to appease the greens when the area was added to the World Heritage area in 1989 despite a Commission of Inquiry finding it did not have sufficient environmental values for World Heritage!

Fire fighters from NSW were flown into assist on 10 January.

This fire had spread to Lake Rhona, with firefighters trying to save trappers huts, miners dwelling and the former farm “Gordonvale” within the ‘pristine’ TWWHA. Lake Rhona itself was the scene of firefighting in 1983 when it was not part of the world heritage area, with crews ensuring the fire was contained and did not escape into the ANM pulp and Paper Mill’s concession area to its east.

This concession had been granted in the late 1930’s to ensure a timber supply for the Boyer newsprint mill. The first thing the forest managers did was to establish fire lookout towers and train crews to protect the timber asset from the summer wildfire.

This need was fresh in the minds of all Tasmanians in those days as many had seen the devastating impact of the 1934 fires in the region. Tasmania has faced a series of devastating fires from early settlement in 1803.

About a third of this pulp mill wood supply concession area was added to the world heritage area in 1989 when the Hawke Labor government overturned the findings of its own Helsham Inquiry into the Lemonthyme and Southern forests that investigated whether 275,000 ha of forest was worthy to be added to the pristine wilderness.

It found only 27,400 ha met the criteria for outstanding universal value. The Environment Minister instead recommended the whole inquiry area plus 113,000 ha of other public land. Even this was not enough and the Prime Minister with the support of the Green Independents increased the total area to an additional area of 604,645 ha.

There was no detailed scientific or social and economic impact assessment of this expansion, although Tasmania was given $50 million in compensation and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) acting on information supplied by green lobbyists stated the area would be sufficient to protect its values.

It hoped that State forest bordering the property would act as a buffer zone between the wilderness and the state’s social and economic assets. Such a hope disappeared in 2013, when the Labor Federal government nominated a further 172,000 ha to be added, in an attempt to again appease green voters.

Such extensions has meant the wilderness area now covers almost one quarter of the State and is now so remote and devoid of infrastructure that when natural lighting strikes ignite wildfires it is now a major disaster. The 1989 to 2013 extensions mean that if the fire escapes the world heritage area it will threaten public and private assets such as the $600 million forest plantation singed by the Gell River fire.

There is now a current claim to increase the TWWHA to 2,190,000 or 32.2% of the State. It is time to learn the lesson and to demand that this latest proposal be totally rejected and we say no to these never ending demands of no more lock ups.

As stated Lake Rhona suffered a bush fire in 1983 as the List map shows along with earlier bushfires in the area. However the area was added to the TWWHA in 1989 after being ‘destroyed’ by fire!
But the greens were trying to get more publicity on the back of the current Lake Rhona bush fire. Greens Senator Nick McKim using former wilderness society director Geoff Law as an ‘expert’, Mr Law said bushfires could cause “irreversible damage and complete devastation” to Tasmania’s unique wilderness. “This ancient alpine vegetation, which goes back millions of years, occurs in an enchanted setting of glacial lakes and spectacular rocky skylines, this sort of terrain is unique to the Tasmanian wilderness and the high-altitude country will not grow back. Once it’s killed, that’s it.’

A very different view was expressed by veteran fire fighter and bushman, Barry Burns:

"For the past few weeks I have watched and listened to the way the Gell River Fire was attacked, but can't believe how political this fire has been. Because it's World Heritage the red tape behind the scenes are pathetic. If they had allowed for machines to be taken in to fight this fire the best way we know how it could of prevented the mess that we are now left with. Sorry but hey not much too look at now out at the Wilderness because it's all burned barren and going to take a he'll of a long time to recover. We had fires out there on the late 60s, we took in Dozers and run a fire break up the Gordon River Bend, we then back burned it the following day the fire was out. When I was with ANM we used to go out and burn the Button Grass on the Gordon Plains we used to do this burn in late October after the wet winters so that only the Button Grass would burn and the fire wouldn't burn into the peat. This was a Low Intensity Burn to protect the Florentine valley. I realize it is World Heritage but we need a balance and the only way to protect this area is to fight fire with fire and to do this we need to, and have decent fire breaks as well."

Therefore we should work to convert the low quality -wilderness areas into buffer zones with natural resource extraction allowed on a tread lightly and widely basis and provide an economic return from these natural resources to pay for the provision of access roads and on the ground infrastructure to ensure wild fire can be fought and contained to these high quality wilderness places.

It is our understanding that the 2013 extension to the TWWHA brought the eastern boundaries right up to the fence line boundaries of around 1030 private freehold properties, mostly in the electorate of Lyons, and especially around the Western Tiers. This is understood to be very unsettling to the owners of those freehold properties, who not only have management implications coming across their boundaries, but they are looking across their fences to the west and north west, the direction the worst fire weather comes, and are looking at land management regimes that are putting their properties at risk, and their lives in danger. They know there are not adequate resources within the Parks budget for fire mitigation within reserves, and there is an effective policy stance of letting fires run their course, of reluctance to opt early for ground-based and
track-driven machinery, and in the current situation this could amount to culpable negligence. This is a legal liability that the state may have no scope to ignore, if not in the legal sense, then certainly in the moral sense, once it is drawn to its attention.

The deliberate down-sizing of the timber industry led to thousands of job losses across all sectors of the industry, as well as on the public forest manager, which now has around 141 FTE positions, down from nearly 600 ten years ago. A lot of highly qualified and experienced people have left the industry, across all sectors, as well as from the public forest manager, which did have a reputation as having one of the best remote area firefighting teams. Some of these, a small number, have gone across to Parks & Wildlife, and while they do an excellent job, the resources available and some of the management practices remain of concern.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of large dozers generally available from among the private entities, not just those associated with forestry. The reduction in forestry road building and maintenance has contributed to this, and the change in new forest harvesting and forwarding equipment is compounding it. Can the public purse pick up the cost of providing suitable heavy dozers, especially if it has been political interference that has decimated private assets associated with the timber industry?

It would be better to maintain and expand a modern forest industry in both native forest and plantations across all available tenures as the best means to contribute to access and capability, and to contribute to the funding of best practice land management across all tenures and classifications, with a particular focus on wildfire mitigation and suppression.

**Riveaux Road fire**

This fire was started on January 15th, when about 2,500 dry lightning strikes were reported sparking more than 70 bushfires across the State including the West Coast and Great Pine Tier on the Central Plateau. In the Southern forests the lighting strikes did not discriminate by land tenure however the responses to such ignition appears to be starkly different. This should be a key consideration of this Inquiry.

The difference in policy, priorities and willingness to immediately deploy firefighting assets between STT & PWS is seen as a factor in the speed and ability to suppress this fire. It is understood that these differences resulted in a 3 day delay in a fire fighting response at the Riveaux Road fire in the Huon Valley.

The fire started in an area that was added to World Heritage listing in 2013 that was a previously logged coupe. It was initially located by STT, reported and was then handed over to PWS who are responsible for management of WHA land. It is understood anecdotally that an initial field check of the fire reported it small and controllable. It is believed that PWS did not give it a high priority initially.. It is understood that on day 3 after the fire started, a response was finally issued by PWS by which time the fire had grown in size and difficult to control/... An opinion has been heard that this fire could have been extinguished in half a day if it was addressed quickly, and a ground crew with two dozers and an excavator was what was required.

It is possible that this fire that could have been stopped by an immediate response from the land manager, resulted in a national fire emergency. Homes were lost. Hundreds evacuated and displaced from their homes for weeks. Tahune Airwalk, a major tourist attraction sustains significant damage. Multi-millions of dollars damage to Ta Ann and NSFP mills at Southwood. Fire damage to an estimated 70% of the Huon Valley's timber resource and hundreds of fire fighters, paid and unpaid, spend hundreds of hours in dangerous conditions fighting the fire.
Riveaux Road Fire boundary from TFS web site 23 January 2019, and same area from List Map showing conservation reserves and TWWHA (shaded area-brown and green) Non shaded area, land managed by STT.

Firefighting assets

Vision broadcast of some of the smaller aerial fight fighting equipment such as helicopters showed a lack of success against the wildfire. The bigger aircraft such as the Sky Crane Erickson S-64 Air-Crane with greater capacity appeared more effective. Whilst Tasmania has a significant disadvantage in it topography to other states, e.g. hilly and mountainous terrain, it does have the advantage of being an island with many lakes both natural and main made providing abundant fresh water for firefighting. It would seem prudent to consider amphibious aircraft, to be deployed where the terrain is best suited for such craft.

The Beriev BE-200 is a multipurpose amphibious aircraft manufactured by Russia-based Irkut. The BE-200 cooperation programme includes key aviation industry companies such as Beriev Aircraft, Airbus, EADS-Irkut Seaplane. The BE-200 can be configured for firefighting, search and rescue, maritime patrol and environmental monitoring, cargo and passenger transportation operations. It can take off and land on unprepared airstrips and water. Designed as a multirole amphibious platform, the BE-200 can be configured for a range of missions. The aircraft is a high-wing T-tail monoplane with a single-step design hull. The design provides stability in water. The BE-200 fire-fighting variant has a crew of two members, and is fitted with fire extinguishing fluid and water tanks. The aircraft can drop 270 tonnes of water on the fire area without refuelling.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfT2EUsfOk&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3-A1ec-rz6hhTM34nlhe4ZJt9pGejCRKX6Cpyq5WvtX_yao4xiMVCzBm8

Tasmania needs access to these aircraft if it is serious about firefighting in 'wilderness' areas, especially where fire trails and access roads have been removed.

Ground based machinery is also needed to fight the inevitable fires, such as ‘dozers. These can create containment lines, defendable spaces and assist and complement fire fighters on the ground. This machinery needs to be both up to date with the latest communications and safety equipment as well as to have experienced and trained operators experience in firefighting techniques and working with other fire fighting assets. While television coverage of water-bombing aircraft captures the public’s attention and support, it is very expensive, and a short time later the water has evaporated, especially quickly in the height of a bad summer fire season. This is a problem if a wind change brings the fire back over areas already water-bombed. The effective use of ground-based machinery combined with back-burning and fuel reduction gives the best and more lasting treatment of the fire ground.
Fuel reduction burning
In January 2013, a series of devastating bushfires impacted several rural communities, with significant loss of property, livelihood and our natural environment.

The Tasmanian Bushfire Inquiry that followed recommended a coordinated program of fuel reduction burns across the entire State, to target areas that pose the greatest risk of future catastrophic fires.

The fuel reduction program will not prevent bushfires, but it can make them easier and safer to fight. This will reduce damage to homes, businesses and the environment. To achieve this, Tasmania must conduct more fuel reduction burns every year, in a strategic and coordinated manner. Fuel reduction burning can also provide the opportunity for training of fire fighters and test both equipment and communication planning.

Vegetation and fuels accumulating on any land are the responsibility of the manager of that land. Any fire that occurs on or invades that land becomes the responsibility of the manager who must try to prevent it escaping that land. The longer not burnt - the more the fuel, higher the flames, more the damage, faster the spread and less the chance of controlling the next fire.

There has been an increasing resistance to both fuel reduction burning from the green political movement and allied academics. There also appears a lack of willingness and resources for Parks and wildlife Services to carry out an increasing number of these burns. In the TWWHA there has been much debate and comment in developing a management plan promoting such activity.

Other contemporary writers have also identified that we must learn the lessons from past mistakes and to implement change. Such an article at https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/doomed-planet/2019/02/bushfire-management-wisdom-versus-folly/ by Western Australian forester and fire fighter Roger Underwood should be fully considered by this inquiry despite its focus on another state but a similar fire event.

To echo Roger’s words “The serious bushfire is like a disease that is incubated over many years; good land management is the preventative medicine that ensures the disease does not become a killer epidemic. To me, the epidemic of recent killer bushfires is no indicator of an inevitable future. They are an indicator of the inevitable consequences of what has happened in the past. To me, these fires toll like bells: they toll for failed leadership, failed governance and failed land management.”

Blaming climate change
Media commentary supported claims by Green politicians that did not focus on these issue of change of land management and tenure, of fuel reduction burning and the fire history of Tasmania, the reporting focus was to shift the blame for these fires on to the theory of human caused climate Change.

The Fire History of the State appears to be ignored and even denied! No mention of fire history in the Mercury’s opinion piece of 11 January on the Gell River/Lake Rhona Fire instead the media reported “The Gell river fire is fitting part of a broader global picture of increased landscape fire activity in step with climate change.”!!!

Such a pattern is predicted by the International Panel on Climate Change if global temperature reaches 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels sometime in the future. To combat such a predicted change it is important land management, firefighting resources and fuel reduction burning and other mitigations are in place and that we learn the lessons from this and previous fires. That we recognise that Tasmania’s environment is already fire prone and has been subject to landscape scale wild fire in the past and will continue to be so in the future as the climate changes regardless of whether this is human induced or naturally occurring.
The List Map Fire History, showing previous fires in the Gell River /Lake Rhona area.

The activists at Get Up! produced this stark piece of propaganda in relation to the Riveaux road fire:

![Map of previous fires](image)

Instead of trying to scare us on Climate Change GetUp! would be better off learning of the 1967 bush fires in southern Tasmania, fires that occurred before the phrase "climate change" was coined to give protesters a reason to destroy modern industrial jobs:

A brief summary of this fire 50 years ago is:

By mid-morning on 7 February, it was estimated there were 110 fires burning in the southern part of the State. Many were reportedly started in previous days. The temperature on the day reached 39 degrees and a Forest Fire Danger Index rating of 128, placing it in the catastrophic range.

Over 24 hours, the bushfires:
- burned 264,270 ha
- destroyed 1,400 homes and other 128 buildings
- killed 62 people and injured another 900
- destroyed 80 timber bridges, 5,400 km of fencing and 1,500 vehicles
- caused stock losses of 62,000.
Recommendations

- That there be no further expansion of the conservation reserve system or the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

- That the management of the TWWHA be revised to designate the 1982 area as core wilderness, and that all other extensions be managed as buffer zones to that wilderness or revert back to production forest.

- That these buffer zones have access roads and tracks, fire trails and fire breaks and be subject to regular fuel reduction burning.

- That in the buffer zones and production forest the standard operating procedure is early as possible fire suppression on detection using all resources available to the fire fighters including, ground based machinery, water tankers, aerial tankers and that firefighting be coordinated by a single agency.

- To have available the capacity to rapidly deploy and effectively use appropriate fire fighting technology and equipment, together with sufficient, trained personnel in order to suppress wild fires before they become unmanageable and impossible to stop.

- That the federal government be asked to consider the purchase of large amphibious aircraft such as the BE-200 and the Erickson S-64 Air-Cranes.

- That there be full implementation of the 2013 inquiry recommendation on a fuel reduction burning regime.

- That there be a clear public statement by fire authorities and the inquiry that these fires are not the result of increased Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere but are part of the natural Tasmanian bushfire heritage.

- Implementation of sound forest and land management based on reducing the bush fire risk and the intensity of wild fire when it occurs.

Yours sincerely,

George Harris
President
Huon Resource Development Group Inc.

03 May 2019
Terms of Reference for Independent Review into 2018-19 bushfires

The Tasmanian Government has released the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review into 2018-19 bushfires as a key part of the bushfire recovery process.

The review will consider the following matters:

- The causes, chronology and response of the 2018-19 bushfires in Tasmania on and following 28 December 2018.
- The effectiveness of community messaging and warnings.
- The timeliness and effectiveness of the fire response and management strategy, including accommodating the priorities of life, property, environmental and cultural values, and timber production and forest asset values by Tasmanian fire agencies.
- The impact and effectiveness of fuel management programs in the fire affected areas on the management and containment of the fires.
- The effectiveness of state, regional and local command, control and co-ordination arrangements, to include agency interoperability and the co-ordination of emergency management activities with government and non-government organisations.
- The effectiveness of the arrangements in place for requesting and managing interstate and international assistance and the significance of interstate and international assistance in managing the fires.
- The use and effectiveness of aviation firefighting resources, in particular, the suitability of aircraft types for the protection of environmental values, forest assets and the rural/urban interface in Tasmania.
- Any other matter that the Review team identifies in the course of its activities as warranting discussion.
- The Review team will provide a means for members of the public and other interested parties to make submissions to the Review and will have regard to any submissions received in compiling its report.

As previously announced, the Review will be chaired by Mal Cronstedt AFSM who will be joined on the Review team by;

- Guy Thomas – Director of Asset Services with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Paul Considine – Director of Capability and Assurance at Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council.

Public submissions will be called for on 6 April 2019 and there will be a four week consultation period closing on 3 May 2019. Members of the public will be able to lodge formal submissions or make an appointment to talk in person or on the phone to the Review team.

The Terms of Reference and details of the Review will also be available on the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management’s website at www.dpfem.tas.gov.au

The final review is expected to be delivered to Government by July this year.