

Sent: Friday, 18 January 2013 4:48 PM
To: 'tfacommttee@parliament.tas.gov.au'
Subject: Review of Forest Peace Deal by Leg. Council.

To: The Select Committee, Legislative Council, Parliament of Tasmania. From: Jeff Leddin,
As with most Tasmanians, I also wish to see a Forest Peace Deal, which, with appropriate amendments recommended by the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, will do its utmost to ensure the best possible set of conditions and provisions, and that will undergird the fullest viability and sustainability for the State's forests, and dependent industries. The livelihoods through jobs, secured for many, in one of our State's most bountiful, beautiful natural resource - forests and timber, is an indispensable segment of the State's economy. The writer's wish to see the full development, and appropriate conservation of our State's natural advantages and assets will be evidenced, I trust, in the following.

In the wise stewardship of these resources, now and for the future, the writer wishes to offer a contribution, by submitting thought papers on three matters:

1. A high quality, fully- sealed tourist road through the Tarkine wilderness;
2. Two wood-waste powered electricity generation plants, one in the north of the State, and the other in the south of the State; and
3. A Nation-wide squadron of permanently-based, Russian, Beriev/Irkut BE-200 Amphibian fire-fighting multi-purpose aircraft, to assist in the protection of our State's, and the Nation's population, property, wilderness, forests and associated industries and livelihoods, infrastructure, wildlife, flocks, herds, agriculture and other innumerable, income-producing assets. Taxes for Federal governance programmes are thus provided, when protected.

The last subject is addressed first. The writer delivered his submission on this subject, to the offices of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 15th January. It comprised written/photocopied papers, together with three DVD's.

One DVD contained video descriptions of the BE-200 amphibian multi-purpose water bomber, and an interview with President of Irkut/Beriev, Mr. Oleg Demchenko. The other two DVD's contain the same information – namely, the destructive fires in Greece between July – September, 2007, in which 64 lives were lost, 270,000 hectares destroyed, and sadly, scenes of the destruction which fires similarly cause in our Nation. The DVD's also depict the contribution that Russia's Emergencies Ministries – EMERCOM, made through its BE-200's, Ilyushin-76 tankers, helicopters and other equipment.

It would be appropriate at this point, to state that I am a patriotic Australian, who has contributed in various ways to our Nation's commonwealth, as much as the next citizen. I am 73 years, retired Accountant by training, Chartered Company Secretary, and founded a small business, as owner and operator, in fruit juice processing, packaging and distribution, of retail packs in NSW and Queensland, and bulk loads in road tankers. I was familiar with most pome fruit growers and fruit processors in the Nation, one way or another.

Our knowledge of the Russian firefighting, amphibian aircraft, is derived from free-to-air telecasts from RT TV ("Russia Today"), one of the English language foreign programmes available on Optus' D2 satellite.

This dissertation will be assessed as different, even controversial, from usual approaches. I would appeal to every reader to assess the material on its merits, its bearing in the context of the real

world in which we find ourselves living in today – and not to ‘shoot the messenger’, should the material differ from one’s own opinion/s.

This submission is made from a layman’s understanding of the powers of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Tasmania, in that it is able to make recommendations for new policies, and amendments to existing legislation, to the Tasmanian Government. In turn, it can propose new legislation for the benefit of the State. The State Gov’t. can then take the lead in proposing new Federal policy direction/s, and legislation, to the State’s Federal Parliamentarians. A recent example was the legalising of homosexual marriages. (I am not a lawyer, only a layman, nay, layperson!)

TASMANIAN FIRES, burnt forests/plantations, and timber mill at Dunnalley.

ON MY CONSCIENCE.

CLIMATE CHANGE.

NATIONAL AERIAL FIREFIGHTING CENTRE.

RADICAL NEW FEDERAL APPROACH TO NATIONAL DEFENCE REQUIRED. That is, recognition of INTERNAL enemies WITHIN the Nation.

Internal = Bushfires and Floods.

BUILDING AIRCRAFT IN AUSTRALIA, to defend our nation. Sir John (Beaufighter) Storey.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.

TASMANIAN FIRES. Be-200 amphibian firebombers first came to my notice in 2007. I immediately recognised the incredible benefit to our Nation that BE-200 aircraft offered, when they first were reviewed on Russian Television. There is every probability that if our Nation had possessed a squadron of BE-200 firebombers, the destruction to our State this year; to Victoria, especially on Black Saturday, February, 2009, and the lives lost; and in all other states, would surely have been substantially reduced. The BE-200 manufacturer approached the Australian Government in 2007 proposing leasing arrangements, for the forthcoming fire season. Such offer would remain for year to year. Such as in Victoria, February, 2009. Such as in Tasmania, January, 2013. Pertinent demonstrations of the extraordinary, purpose-designed and built capability of these amphibian firebombers, was not allowed to be demonstrated in either Victoria or Tasmania. To fight the Victorian February, 2009 fires, the aircraft, if working in tandem, could have scooped up water from both Port Phillip Bay, and/or Lake Eildon. In Tasmania this year, the Derwent and the many waterways around Southern Tasmania in proximity to the fire centres, could have provided on-the-go, water-taxiing scooping of water replenishment locations, for firebombing.

ON MY CONSCIENCE. In the above paragraph, I referred to the Victorian bushfires of February, 2009, in which 173 lives were lost.

Upon learning of the BE-200 amphibian for firefighting, I pondered how this aircraft could be brought to the notice of the Eastern Seaboard States’ Fire Commissioners. I decided upon the following procedure. I would provide a DVD of scenes demonstrating the amphibian, scenes of it firefighting in Greece and Croatia, and a covering letter to each State Fire Commissioner. I then proposed that each State’s Fire Commissioner would confer with each other, and discuss the merits of the BE-200 for application in Australia. The next step would be for each Fire Commissioner to lobby their State Premier, for each Premier to then discuss these amphibian firebomber multi-purpose aircraft at the next scheduled COAG meeting.

It was hoped that a unanimous consensus of States’ Premiers would petition the Federal Government to purchase a squadron of these planes, or at least, lease sufficient number to adequately combat fires on the many fronts, and with concurrent burning in a number of States, during our fire season/s.

My hopes were dashed, and my plan of procedure remained stillborn, when in September, 2007 I visited the Hobart headquarters of the Tasmanian Fire Commissioner, for the purposes of :

1. Making an appointment to speak with the Fire Commissioner, Mr. Gledhill; and
2. Obtain a list of the postal addresses for the Fire Commissioner in each State.

Wishing to speak privately and as soon as possible with Fire Commissioner Gledhill, of the BE-200's suitability for firefighting in Australia, I requested of the Receptionist of the day, an appointment. When I declined to reveal the sensitive, and to me, secret (at that time) nature of the business which I wished to lay before the Commissioner, and stating it was of a "confidential" nature, the Receptionist refused my request. She was zealous in 'protecting' her boss, and her own 'turf' ! Very discouraged, I let this subject lapse, my enthusiasm wane, and moved forward with other matters. As a consequence, neither the letters nor the DVDs to each State Fire Commissioner of Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory were ever sent. In good faith, the letter and DVD in a buff envelope intended for the Tasmanian Fire Commissioner I have included for the Select Committee's attention. I now invite them to forward same to the current Tas. Fire Commissioner, Mr. Mike Brown, on my behalf.

Come Black Saturday, Victoria, February, 2009.

My conscience was SEARED, as I recall letting the pomposity of a receptionist de-rail me from my goal of starting the 'ball rolling', of obtaining sufficient fixed-wing, 12,000 litre/12 tonnes of water-scooping in 18-seconds ability, amphibian planes, earlier.

Could I charge that receptionist with complicity, indirectly, for the deaths, or even some of the deaths, of the souls lost on that Black Saturday ? Why didn't I try and make an appointment to see the Commissioner another time? How much of the deaths, and millions of dollars of destruction to property etc., could have been prevented during that period, were at least two BE-200's in operation fighting those fires at that time ? To these questions, the answers to which we shall now never know.

Following Black Saturday, I lived now with a very heavy heart and a conscience that was challenging to live with. Such was my burden, that once more, I decided to find courage and raise the issue of grossly inadequate regard towards SERIOUS aerial firefighting assets for our Nation. A few weeks later, in the beginning of March, 2009 another major fire threat arose once more in Victoria. Not possessing any sort of computer until as late as April, 2011, I faxed the Country Fire Authority and the Commissioner of Victorian Emergency Services, and advised them of the firefighting aircraft on standby with the Russian Emergency Services, such as their BE-200s, and the much larger Ilyushin-76.

I failed to make a submission to the Victorian Royal Commission into the Black Saturday catastrophe. None-the-less, my faxes were in the possession of various responsible persons to whom they had been sent in early March. These faxes probably, were not properly brought before the Royal Commission. Copies of such communications are included in this submission to the Select Committee. Victoria suffered the destruction of much of THEIR forests, plantations, and timber mills during that period.

CLIMATE CHANGE. It is on this subject that this writer offers this unconventional perspective. It is up to each individual reader as to how it is received. It is the reader's choice to either accept or reject the concept that there is a God, whom may have something to say about Climate Change Himself. God is usually the last Person whom Humankind thinks of consulting, in His Bible, for a "comment" – or a quick sound byte – for the media!

Included in this submission are thought papers from a Biblical perspective, and where references may be found to occurrences in the realm of Nature, as we are now experiencing more often, and with greater intensity and ferocity.

An explanation for "The Purpose of These Manifestations", is supplied in a July 11, 1907 periodical article, titled, "An Earthquake Escape", written by K.C. Russell, from the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. It reads:

"These manifestations bear the special marks of God's power, and are designed to cause the people of the earth to tremble before him, and to silence those who, like Pharaoh, would proudly say, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?'"

This writer is only the messenger bearing this information. The reader who is wise, will recognise the priceless "intelligence of the highest order" that this is, which is here being offered – our future being foretold, forecast, prophesied, if you will, on Climate Change.

From THIS intel on Climate Change, this writer understands that we in Australia are to expect an increase in 'conflagrations' – massive fires, and more disastrous floods. These are the Nation's enemies within. These must NOW be recognised as such, and radically new and different approaches towards coping with these enemies from now on, planned for, and immediately adopted. Big problems for a big Nation, need big equipment solutions to meet them, from now on. See more later.

NATIONAL AERIAL FIREFIGHTING CENTRE. " This body (NAFC) was incorporated on 30 July, 2003 (following the catastrophic fires in Canberra in January, 2003 ?) with the primary purpose of establishing a national capacity to deliver effective aerial firefighting support to Australian States and Territories for the combat of wildfire.

". . . Following a number of serious fires which affected the Nation, the Australian Government, along with the State and Territory Governments, decided to develop a national co-operative arrangement to enhance firefighting by improving access to aerial firefighting resources and implement systems for resource -sharing across the country.

"The Australian Government has subsequently provided annual funding to complement the funding contributed by State and Territory Governments for aerial firefighting.

". . . The organisation arranges the acquisition of a national fleet of firefighting aircraft, which are shared between member States and Territories". (NAFC Annual Report 2007-2008)

From the NAFC Annual Report of 2006-2007, "The Australian Government continued the previously agreed base level funding support for the national aerial firefighting fleet of \$5.5 million, which in turn was matched by State and Territory Governments. Recognising the potential of the 2006-07 season, the Aust. Gov't. was approached by the NAFC through the Minister for Local Gov't., Territories and Roads to assist with provision for additional resources. An extra \$2.5m was subsequently made available, and matched by States and Territories, bringing the Australian Government's commitment for 2006-07 to \$8.0m."

"With the three-year funding arrangement due to expire at the conclusion of 2006-07, . . ." the NAFC made further submissions to the Aust. Gov't. regarding ongoing support. "These efforts were recognised with the Prime Minister's announcement on 27 April 2007 that the Australian Gov't. would continue their support of aerial fire suppression and contribute \$41.2m to positioning and leasing of aircraft over the next four years."

Annual Australian Government funding for support of aerial fire suppression, 2006 – 2012:

2006 \$5.5million -- 29 RW (rotary wing, i.e. Helicopters) and 6 FW (fixed wing) aircraft.

2007 \$8m

2008 \$10m

2009 \$14.2m

2010 \$13.36m

2011 \$14.06m

2012 \$14.41m (Sources: NAFC Annual Reports, ex hard copy & internet from NAFC website. E & O.E.) -- Approximately 55 RW and (? FW – not referenced by this writer during authoring this submission).

Fixed wing aircraft are of the converted, crop-duster type, of various capacities, up to 3,000 litres. Helicopters are also of various capacities, and also slow delivery speed times.

I first used the term – “Thimble-sized” – to describe the buckets used by helicopters for firefighting, in my fax to Mr. John Haynes, Country Fire Authority, Melbourne, (and also Attention: Mr. Bruce Esplin, Commissioner , Emergency Services) on Sunday, 1st March, 2009.

In commenting upon the Tasmanian fires of January, 2013, Geoffrey Luck, who worked for the ABC for 26 years as a senior reporter and news editor, penned a piece for The Australian newspaper, January 7, 2013, decrying our Nation’s approach to firefighting. He wrote in support of the deployment and use of Canadian-made Bombardier 415 amphibian firebombers, with a scoop-up capacity of 6,000 litres in 12 seconds at 130 km/hr, and deliver to fire at 300 km/hr.

The next day, in further comment in The Australian, a John Rowe, Edgewcombe, Victoria responded, “The Tasmanian bushfires were devastating. What never ceases to disappoint me is, once again, the vision of dinky little helicopters dropping THIMBLEFULS of water on the fire with barely any visible effect at all. Those articles and letters in The Australian of January 7 and 8 are recommended reading, from both their poignancy and relevance.

Every person in our Nation whose life has been affected by destructive fires, will be appalled to eventually learn that our Government has known of far better, larger firefighting aircraft at least since 2007. All can only ponder how many lives could have been saved, and homes, property, infrastructure, and agriculture and other productive, job-providing assets lost, not to mention the huge loss of wildlife, herds, flocks, and the burns/injuries and suffering borne by these helpless, dumb creatures.

RADICAL NEW APPROACH TO NATIONAL DEFENCE REQUIRED. The Australian Government has to reappraise the meaning of the defence of our Nation ‘in toto’. DEFENCE , logically and of imperative necessity, must be understood in the two terms of :

1. Internal; and
2. External.

Threats to our Nation internally, by now should be acknowledged as coming upon us in the form of :

- (a) Fire; and
- (b) Flood.

I draw upon the opinion of our much-respected, now retired General Peter Cosgrove, for his observations, as he perceives, as future threats to our Nation. He was invited to deliver the Boyer

Lectures for 2009. His subject concentrated on our national security. “ ‘It exists rather as a continuum of cost versus benefit’ – a question of just how much we are prepared to endure, pay, concede or surrender to achieve a particular state of security. “ Illegal immigration frequently comes to mind when discussing national security, but he quickly reminded us that this is only one aspect, pointing to the POTENTIAL OF SEVERE CLIMATE CHANGE IN OUR REGION TO AFFECT OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, as did potentially, the tsunami of late 2004. (Emphasis; This writer).

Internal Security Funding. All Australians of the last few generations, with the current generation, have a fair idea of the destruction floods and fires cause our Nation, our internal enemies and source of threats. All could assess that helicopters are now indispensable in search and rescue, and relief, during such flood disasters. The Aust. Gov’t. levels of funding providing for helicopters since 2006, with their numbers, compared with their useful effectiveness, may be fairly easily quantified and analysed, and any funding adjustments calculated with some accuracy with the expected increase in numbers and intensity in coming years. Perhaps their budget settings and fleet numbers and composition “about right” ? That is for our National Emergencies to adjudicate.

Fighting our other major internal enemy – wildfires, needs to be URGENTLY re-assessed. We DO NOT have appropriately-sized aircraft, nor in anywhere sufficient numbers to battle the ‘enemy’ on many fronts, in many States, at the same time, as is presently occurring, at this time of writing. The peak summer month is usually recognised as February. In other words, our Nation may expect many more fires to erupt anywhere, between now and say, April. We need to be better prepared. Since 2006, we have illustrated that the Aust. Gov’t. believed that in 2006, \$5.5m was adequate. In 2012, \$14.4m., and this is for the funding of primarily helicopters, for Internal Defence !!!

National Defence Spending. For External Defence.

Dr Alan Stephens, a visiting fellow at University of NSW, ADFA, wrote an opinion piece on July 26, 2012, titled “ Australia’s defence budget is more than adequate” , in comment that a reduction in defence spending from the equivalent of 1.8% of GDP the previous year to 1.56%, the smallest in 70 years, was made. Australia’s 2012-13 federal budget was released in May. He was responding to US criticism, that our Defence spending had fallen below the level the US expected of its allies.

To his point, he states, “Budget cuts notwithstanding, Australia will still outlay some \$27 billion on defence in each of the next five or so years.” Elsewhere, he further writes, the US officials chose not “to acknowledge that Australia has spent in the order of \$1.3 billion a year for the past 10 years, for little apparent gain, supporting the US’s ill-considered and badly- run invasion of Afghanistan. And it is not possible to place a cost on the deaths of the 33 Australian soldiers who have been killed on operations there.”

So, we pose these questions to our Australian Government – have Australians had value for money in fighting our external ‘threats’ and enemies, and lives of our soldiers sacrificed ? And has the Australian Government fully appreciated the value of the COST to our Nation of so many of our citizens, whom have paid the supreme sacrifice, with their lives, and to our Nation’s common wealth, which has been destroyed through wildfires, because of GROSS UNDERFUNDING ?

Let us now look at two suitable, fixed wing firefighting amphibian aircraft which are eligible. The size of the challenge, and the size of our Nation should be borne in mind as we consider.

The Russian, more modern, purpose-designed for firefighting, the Beriev BE-200 multi-purpose amphibian, scoops up 12 tonnes/12,000 litres water in 14-18 seconds at 180 km/hr, and delivers at 560 km/hr cruise speed.

The Canadian, older design, purpose-designed for firefighting, the Bombardier 415 amphibian
. scoops up 6 tonnes/ 6,000 litres water in 12 seconds at 130 km/hr, and delivers at 300 km/hr.

The most suitable aircraft for Australia's needs should be apparent. When so many bush/wildfires burn in so many parts of our Nation at the same time, it is obvious that we need the fastest, optimum capacity and -sized amphibian aircraft which can fly quickly to the fire outbreaks, water/retardant bomb them as quickly as possible with as much water as possible, and hurry on to the next lot of wildfires, then on to the next, and so on. And despatched to an outbreak as soon as it is spotted, not waiting for ground brigades to try to battle the inferno beforehand. It is too late to try to get on top of such fires after they have gotten the upper hand. Countless times this has proven to be false economy. Then it is only THIMBLEFUL-sized bucket carrying, slow lumbering helicopters, or crop-dusting/spraying toy planes are deployed. David against Goliath, but David has 'one hand tied behind his back', so to speak. His "armoury" of pebbles is truly insufficient for the task to overcome his Goliath.

BUILDING AIRCRAFT IN AUSTRALIA. The following will show why I may have more than a passing interest in defending our Nation from air. During WW11, we built our own warplanes to defend our Nation from external enemies and threats. My late uncle, Sir John (Beaufighter) Storey, of Melbourne, was placed in charge of the production, from Australia's own industrial manufacturing resources, of 700 Beaufort twin-engined bombers, and over 350 twin-engined Beaufighters, and modified, four-engined Lancaster bombers, which evolved into the Lincoln patrol bombers. Australia has let its aircraft manufacturing defence industries dwindle, and the Australian ownership of many of those companies.

However, we can again engage in parts for aircraft manufacture, which are termed "offsets", from the overseas aircraft principals/manufacturers, which help reduce our purchase cost of each plane, and at the same time, build up and maintain a skilled workforce for ongoing maintenance of the fleet.

Australia's defence forces' fighting assets have NO amphibian, multi-purpose aircraft. During WW11, and before and after, numerous types graced our skies and waterways, and saved lives. The Catalinas were just one, as also the Sunderlands. Firefighting waterbombers, search and rescue, maritime patrol, reconnaissance, surveillance, border patrol – these are the many duties which are required by our Country to defend our shores internally, and externally.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. From a reading of the Annual Reports of the NAFC, not one word has ever been mentioned about the BE-200 amphibian firebombers, despite the fact that the manufacturer, Beriev/Irkut approached our Australian Government in 2007. This information has all been included in my submission. Only aircraft from North America and Poland appear to have been investigated for suitability for our Nation's firefighting needs.

Our Nation needs to shop for the very best available firefighting, amphibian, multi-purpose aircraft in the world, to combat the enemies within our shores, our internal enemies. Firefighting has been addressed- how best to combat the enemy of FIRE. No other nation should have any say, nor influence, over our Country's selection of the best planes for our tasks.

Regarding cost of the BE-200 vs. the Bombardier 415. These may be in the order of approximately \$25m for the Bombardier, and \$40m for the BE-200. (These are very rough guesstimates !)

I thank the Selection Committee for their time in reviewing this submission, this part which addresses how better to protect our forests and associated industries from destruction by fire.

Yours sincerely, Jeff Leddin.