

NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL (NPWAC)
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CRONSTEDT REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF BUSHFIRES DURING THE 2018-19 FIRE SEASON

I refer to an email of 24 April 2019 from the State Fire Management Council advising the Council of the opportunity to provide public comment to the above Review by 3 May 2019.

It is NPWAC's role to advise the Government and the Parks and Wildlife Service on the management of the State's reserved land system. It also has the role of providing advice to the Commonwealth Government on the management of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). In particular, NPWAC is charged with providing advice to both Governments where it regards the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) for which the area has been set aside as a World Heritage Area may be under threat.

NPWAC is gravely concerned about the impacts of wild-fire on the natural and cultural values in our Parks and Reserves system in Tasmania. There is no doubt that the changing climate has brought with it a significantly increased threat from more regular wildfires and circumstances that NPWAC has identified for some time as the greatest threat to the OUVs of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the natural and cultural values in other parks and reserves. We have expressed our concern in the past regarding the lack of preparedness and resources in the State to manage wild-fire in remote locations like the TWWHA.

It is NPWAC's view that at a minimum, there should be sufficient resources to enable:

- a pool of fire-fighters to be properly trained in remote area fire-fighting techniques;
- the availability of at least one winch-capable helicopter dedicated to fighting remote area fires; and
- the availability of at least one aircraft dedicated to this purpose.

There will always be tension between the protection of life and property and the natural and cultural values that are the responsibility of the State and in the case of the TWWHA and other World Heritage sites, the Commonwealth Governments, to protect. Sufficient resource and planning effort must be provided to allow the deliberately prioritising of the protection of our most valuable natural and cultural assets. NPWAC notes the success of the Parks and Wildlife Service in employing these techniques in the most recent fires with limited resources. In particular, the prioritised protection of identified high-value natural assets such as conifers and other threatened species and the use of novel techniques (such as sprinklers and fire foam retardants) to protect these values around high value areas in the face of those fires were both successful and provided insights into future remote-area fire management.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Wells
Chair

24 April 2019