



2 May 2019

By Email  
AFAC.Review@dpfem.tas.gov.au

Dr Felicity Novy  
AFAC Review  
GPO Box 1526  
**HOBART TAS 7001**

Dear Dr Novy

**Cronsted Review of the management of bushfires during the 2018-19 fire season**

PF Olsen Australia is Australia's largest independent forest manager. We manage 250,000 hectares of land in Australia, including 50,000 hectares in Tasmania.

During the 2018/19 bushfire season, over 750 hectares of land we manage was impacted by the Riveaux Road bushfire, including nearly 300 hectares of plantation, worth approximately \$3.5 million dollars. Many of our employees and contractors were involved in firefighting during January and February 2019.

PF Olsen Australia has collaborated with the broader forest industry and is a signatory to the Tasmanian Forest & Forest Products Network submission to this review. We also make this submission to the inquiry to provide further details.

The following comments relate to specific the terms of reference.

**3. The timeliness and effectiveness of the fire response and management strategy, including accommodating the priorities of life, property, forest asset values, environmental and cultural values and timber production by Tasmanian fire agencies.**

One issue that was noted was the standing order to fall back to asset protection when the fire danger was above 25. While PF Olsen Australia fully appreciate the necessity of ensuring firefighter safety and prioritising the protection of life and property, we advocate a more nuanced approach with Sector and Divisional Commanders making decisions about firefighter safety rather than the broad-brush approach of falling back at FDI 25.

It is also important that the value of plantations (and other forest assets) are adequately recognised in planning. We believe that inclusion of a Forest Industry Liaison Officer (discussed under Term of Reference 5) would assist in ensuring this happens.

**4. The impact and effectiveness of fuel management programs in the fire affected areas on the management and containment of the fires.**

PF Olsen Australia strongly believe that a well planned fuel management program, including use of hazard reduction burns and other fuel modification techniques can reduce the spread of wildfire and that fuel management needs to be carried out across all tenures.

**5. 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 NGOs.**

PF Olsen Australia experienced significant issues with co-ordination arrangements, impacting on our ability to assist in fire suppression. Our fire crews were offered to Sustainable Timber Tasmania to assist with suppression of the Riveaux Road fire that was at the time threatening plantations we manage. It took several days for these resources to be accepted, limiting the effectiveness of our crews during this period. Our crews were later asked to leave the fire ground by the Incident Management Team due to liability issues.

PF Olsen Australia firmly believe that there needs to be better integration between the private forest industry and the incident management team(s) to allow effective use of forest industry resources. We advocate for:

- Inclusion of a *Forest Industry Liaison Officer* in level three IMTS where the fire is impacting (or has potential to impact) on forest assets. We note that this is being done successfully in south west Victoria and suggest that a similar approach to the *Plantation Technical Advisor* position be trialled in Tasmania.
- Formal agreements between the Tasmanian Fire Service and private forest owners and managers. We understand that some forest managers have Memorandums of Understanding with the TFS. At a minimum, these MOUs need to be expanded to cover all industrial forest managers, however PF Olsen Australia believe that the Tasmanian Fire Service should implement Forest Industry Brigades, as used by the CFA in Victoria.

PF Olsen Australia understands that one of the issues that resulted in our crews being asked to leave the fire ground was differing training standards between public sector forest managers and some private sector forest management. This, and similar issues such as equipment standards could be resolved through use of forest industry brigades.

If you would like to discuss these issues any further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

**PF OLSEN (AUS) PTY LTD**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Rymer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Stephen Rymer**

*Regional Manager - Tasmania*