

# **Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association**

(Incorporated)

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The Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Association (TMCA) was formed in 1986 by representatives of the families who have links with the Mersey high country. The high country is the area near the source of the Mersey River in Northern Tasmania and is situated along the mid-north boundary of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park.

Since 1888, the area has traditionally been used as summer grazing runs by families who would drive their cattle and sheep to the mountain pastures at the beginning of summer and drive them back to their low land farms in autumn. Possums and wallabies were hunted by members of these families during the winter to add to their incomes.

The TMCA is the voice for the high-country cattlemen and a means of protecting their high-country heritage and traditions.

Today the TMCA is still active in the high country, being caretaker of Allison's Hut, responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. Allison's Hut was a Shepherd's hut in the high country and is one of several huts which are scattered throughout the Central Plateau area.

Members of the TMCA guide bushwalks and lead trail rides in the high country, and several club days are organised throughout the year to pass on traditional stockman's skills, including whip cracking and stockhorse activities. Members also maintain part of the Tasmanian Trail, which stretches from Devonport in the North of Tasmania, to Dover, in the far South, and is used by bushwalkers, cyclists and horse riders.

The current committee and members are gravely concerned about the build-up of fire fuel that has built up in some areas for more than 30 years now.

Insufficient resources are being invested to currently achieve successful management, and land owners are stifled from managing the land and prevent these damaging fires that we have recently seen.

Many of the areas traditionally burnt and grazed by cattlemen have now become overgrown invaded by undesirable species and are now a detonator for wild fire. Our current situation sees us with burns being hindered by Government Legislation, and the result in the Highlands, is the original mixed species grasslands have now been overtaken by kerosene bush.

No one disputes the beauty and magnificent environment that we have, but to limit the management to the point where we end up with many years' worth of fire fuel and allowing it to burn unchecked in catastrophic summer conditions is ridiculous. It is also creating a monoculture situation in the bushland with many of our forests in the same stage of not having been burned, which is decreasing the diversity of both flora and fauna. Many of our native species need fire to propagate, but an out of control, destructive summer fire is not the best way to achieve this.

With a well-timed cool burn, birds survive easily, fauna can escape, and microfauna can survive in the untouched damp areas. The result is a reduction in the fuel load so that a summer fire can be much more easily fought, and is less likely to take hold and cause the destruction of a summer wild fire.

The TMCA are calling for the Government to enable land owners (including Parks) with the capacity to effectively manage the land and environment to prevent the build-up of fire fuel so we can prevent these catastrophic fire situations that we have recently seen.

King Regards,

Danza Hardwicke

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danza Hardwicke', written in a cursive style.

Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen's Secretary