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Strategy and Support
Tasmanian Fire and Emergency Service
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
Hobart TAS 7000

Via email: tfes@dpfem.tas.gov.au

TFPA Submission: Position Paper - State Fire and Emergency Services Commission

The Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Position Paper for the State Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

The TFPA is the peak body for forestry that undertakes policy development, lobbying and advocacy for members interests.

TFPA represents all elements of the value chain from the sustainable harvesting of plantations and multiple use natural forest resource including forest establishment and management, harvesting and haulage, processing of timber resources and manufacture of pulp, paper and bioproducts.

Background

Bushfire is part of the natural history of Tasmania and continues to be a feature of the landscape, as it does for many parts of Australia.

Fire is one of the most important factors in the ecology of Australian forests. It is an essential element of the Australian natural environment that cannot be removed and is integral to maintaining environmental processes.

Fire management is not just about a public response to fire. It jointly involves state agencies and private landholders taking action to prevent fires from starting and knowing how to reduce the impact of fire, as well as jointly fighting fires when they break out.

The current management and cross-jurisdictional coordination in the preparation for, and the management of, the Tasmanian fire season has served the Tasmanian community well in the past.

An important part of this management and coordination is the role of the State Fire Management Council (SFMC). As per the *Fire Services Act 1979*, it provides independent advice to the Minister Police, Fire and Emergency Management and the State Fire Commission about vegetation fire management across Tasmania, particularly in the areas of prevention and mitigation of fires.

The Position Paper

The State Fire and Emergency Services Commission Position Paper calls for the establishment of a State Fire and Emergency Services Commission (SFESC), replacing the existing State Fire Commission (SFC) and making the SFMC a subcommittee of the SFESC.

The structure, as suggested, raises concerns for the Tasmanian forestry industry. The proposed SFESC seems to reduce the input, and potential weight, of external stakeholders, such as our forestry estate managers.

Tasmania's private forestry estate managers look after over 400,000 hectares of forests across the state. The industry's private plantation managers are custodians of a vast segment of our state's land mass, often acting as a "first responder" at times of fire crisis on their estates.

Our members collectively have multiple professional trained fire crews (including additional on-call capability during the fire season), multiple heavy, medium and light tankers, air assets, and an expanding network of fire towers and cameras.

Our members understand that our best way to protect infrastructure, communities and lives during a bushfire is collaboration, coordination and a team approach.

To ensure cross government and major stakeholder involvement continues the TFPA provides the following points:

- i. Maintain SFMC in legislation that includes stating its role and purpose.
- ii. Membership of SFMC continues to have representatives with skills, experience and authority to give advice on fire and vegetation management.
- iii. SFMC maintain the ability to report directly to the Minister.

We believe having the SFMC in legislation provides the government with an advisory body that is representative of community, industry, and government, and that is tasked to work together to effectively build community capacity and resilience in the face of the uncertain future of bushfire. Additionally, Fire Management Area Committees and Fire Management Areas should continue.

Our members believe the SFMC allows significant stakeholders, such as those who manage private plantation forests, have a relevant seat at the table. The current membership of the SFMC provides a cross-section of land managers and landowners across different tenures (private land, public land, sector agencies, local government) and have authority to make decisions on behalf of the organisation they represent.

It is crucial having the ability to directly inform the Minister on bushfire risk management by the SFMC. It is our perspectives that can assist the Minister make informed decisions that reflect the needs and challenges faced by different groups.

When the Minister is well-informed, it reinforces the importance of bushfire risk management and helps drive comprehensive and proactive measures to protect communities and the environment from bushfire threats.

The TFPA looks forward to further discussing the Draft Tasmania Fire and Emergency Service Bill, as the process of further review, and implementation is undertaken.

Yours faithfully



Nick Steel
Chief Executive Officer