



8 April 2016

Christine McDonald
Environment and Communications Reference Committee
Parliament House
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Christine

Subject: Inquiry into the response to, and lessons learnt from, recent bushfires in remote Tasmanian wilderness

Thank you for your letter 22 March 2016 inviting Forico Pty Limited (Forico) to participate in the Inquiry.

Forico commenced operations in September 2014 and manages Tasmania's largest private hardwood plantation estate and uses advanced tree breeding for improved plantation productivity and wood fibre quality. The Forico business includes:

- 100,000 ha of timber plantations
- 175,000 ha of freehold land
- 2 woodchip mills
- A seedling nursery
- A fibre technology laboratory and testing facility
- An experienced team of forest industry professionals with extensive operating experience in Tasmania

As manager of Tasmania's largest private land holding Forico is a significant stakeholder in wildfire management. Forico maintains an active Fire Action Plan which includes private fire suppression resources, experienced staff, and a strong relationship with the Tasmanian Fire Service governed through a Memorandum of Understanding for the sharing of resources.

In 2014/15 fire season Forico responded to 78 uncontrolled fires, 68 in 2013/14, and 125 in 2012/13.

Forico would like to make the following key points in relation to the Inquiry;

1. As a general and longstanding observation, the Tasmanian Fire Service offer a timely and well resourced fire response for private land in Tasmania. Forico strongly supports the Tasmanian Fire Service.
2. The recent bushfires have impacted 'remote Tasmanian wilderness'. However, it should be noted that significant plantation assets were also impacted, and significantly more threatened. These commercial tree plantations provide the foundation for a critical component of the Tasmanian economy.

3. Whilst Forico acknowledges the challenges associated with multi land tenure fires, Forico's experienced fire staff observed several opportunities to more proactively manage the wildfires in the first two week period, for example with the deployment of active back burning and afterhours fire suppression.
4. Further to the point above, Forico also observed a number of opportunities to consolidate fire boundaries that were not utilised in a timely fashion, if at all.
5. Forico actively participated in the various Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in an observer capacity. This function provided critical industry intelligence into the IMT, particularly when the IMT were staffed from interstate agencies with minimal local knowledge. As a specific example, Forico's liaison officer intervened on several occasions where Forico plantations were included in back burning plans due to misinterpretation of plantation value. This observer capacity role should continue to be supported by all involved in multi agency fires.
6. Forico actively participated in the use of Pos-chek on a critical fire boundary. This management tool, alongside the significant aerial support offered by the IMTs, proved to be effective and should continue to be supported.
7. The fire mapping available to the IMT and industry stakeholders was of a very high standard and critical for good decision making. Similarly, the hot spot mapping and subsequent efficient use of Remote Area Teams was also effective in our view.

Once again, Forico would encourage the Committee to recognise the significant commercial assets also impacted by recent bushfires. Forico have identified several opportunities for improvement in future wildfire responses, but place on record a strong level of support for current services provided by the Tasmanian Fire Service.

Yours faithfully

Bryan Hayes
Chief Executive Officer