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06 MAR 2017

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/ Madam

We are writing in relation to the recent Senate Inquiry Report on 'Responses to, and lessons learnt from, the January and February 2016 bushfires in remote Tasmanian Wilderness'.

While there is no requirement for the Tasmanian Government to formally respond to the Report, given the significant interest in the 2016 bushfire in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and that the TWWHA is managed under a partnership arrangement between the Australian and Tasmanian Governments, we have attached the Tasmanian Government's response to the Report's recommendations.

Should you have any queries in relation to this matter, the Tasmanian contact officer is Mr Simon Roberts, Director, Office of Security and Emergency Management, Department of Premier and Cabinet. Mr Roberts can be contacted by email at

Yours faithfully

Matthew Groom MP  
**Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage**

Rene Hidding MP  
**Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

Attachment

Copy to: Hon Josh Frydenberg MP  
Minister for the Environment and Energy  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Hon Michael Keenan MP  
Minister for Justice  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Tasmanian Government response to the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry Report on 'Responses to, and lessons learnt from, the January and February 2016 bushfires in remote Tasmanian wilderness'

Senate Inquiry Report recommendation	Coalition Senators' Dissenting Report	Tasmanian Government position
<p>I That the Australian Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that climate change has increased the risk to natural and cultural values in the TWWHA.</li> <li>• Report annually to the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation in the TWWHA.</li> </ul>	<p>Coalition Senators acknowledged and <b>accepted</b> the potential future impacts of climate change in managing fire in Australia, including in Tasmania</p> <p>Coalition Senators <b>do not support</b> the recommendation to report annually to the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.</p>	<p>The Tasmanian Government has partnered with the Antarctic Climate &amp; Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) to conduct the Climate Futures for Tasmania project.</p> <p>Since 2010, Climate Futures for Tasmania has produced a series of products and reports of anticipated climate change impacts, including summaries for local government areas.</p> <p>Climate Futures for Tasmania recognises that heatwaves are projected to increase as are extreme temperature events and cumulative rainfall deficits (drier conditions).</p> <p>Following the TWWHA bushfires in January and February 2016, the Tasmanian Government commissioned a \$250,000 independent study titled the 'TWWHA Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project' to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examine how climate change will affect future fire danger and other variables that may lead to an increased risk of bushfire, and its impacts on the TWWHA;</li> <li>• provide recommendations on the most appropriate methods for monitoring and recording vegetation dryness levels within the TWWHA; and</li> <li>• examine firefighting techniques, interventions and resources that can be safely and effectively employed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and the Tasmania Fire Service to prepare for, and respond to, bushfires in the TWWHA, including the most</li> </ul>

			<p>appropriate methods to extinguish fire within the alpine areas.</p> <p>The Final Report for the Research Project was publicly released (and provided to the Australian Government) in December 2016. The Final Report makes 18 recommendations to the Tasmanian Government regarding the management of future bushfire threat in the TWWHA.</p> <p>The Tasmanian Government is currently considering its formal response to the Final Report's recommendations. There are clear synergies between the Senate Inquiry Report and the Final Report for the Research Project.</p> <p>The Tasmanian Government is satisfied with the current reporting arrangements to the World Heritage Committee. A State of Conservation reporting is only required where the World Heritage Committee has serious concerns about the state of a particular World Heritage property. The World Heritage Committee has recently expressed positive views about the state of conservation of the TWWHA.</p>
2	<p>That the Australian Government, in cooperation with the Tasmanian Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the need to identify the ecological and biodiversity impacts of fire on fire sensitive vegetation communities, organic soils and endemic fauna species in the TWWHA.</li> <li>• Allocate long-term funding to CSIRO and/or the Tasmanian Government to assist with the</li> </ul>	<p>The need to identify the ecological and biodiversity impacts of fire on fire-sensitive vegetation communities, organic soils and endemic fauna species in the TWWHA is a responsibility of the State Government as the Property manager.</p> <p>The Australian Government is providing an additional \$10.2 million for the identification, protection, conservation and rehabilitation of the World Heritage values of the TWWHA. This funding is in addition to the \$3.4 million per year baseline funding provided between 2013</p>	<p>The Tasmanian Government acknowledges that understanding the fire ecology of ecosystems present in the TWWHA is necessary to develop a model to predict the spread of fire in wet forest and rainforest. The model can be used to develop sustainable planned burning programs, and to protect the region's fire-sensitive and fire-dependent values.</p> <p>This issue was considered by the TWWHA Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project, which provides that further monitoring and research is needed to understand the tolerance of species and landforms to planned and unplanned fires, in order to understand the consequences of fire for the natural and cultural values of the TWWHA.</p>

	development of fire assessment and modelling specific to the TWWHA.	<p>and 2018 to assist with the management of the property.</p> <p>CSIRO is recognised as a world leader in fire behaviour research and continues to directly invest in critical research focussed on improving the management and suppression of bushfires. CSIRO bushfire research covers bushfire management strategies; post-bushfire survey investigations; climate modelling projections; and, development of disaster management software tools.</p> <p>The Australian Government in providing \$3.257 billion to CSIRO over the next four years. In 15-16 the CSIRO invested \$100 million in climate research, comprising \$54 on mitigation research, \$10 million on adaptation research, and \$29 million on reach to better understand the climate.</p>	<p>Specific recommendations from the Research Project's Final Report that may be relevant to this issue include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation 4: Monitoring the consequence of fire</li> <li>• Recommendation 6: Research on fire vulnerability, fire behaviour and fire model inputs</li> <li>• Recommendation 9: Mapping of values</li> <li>• Recommendation 17: Role of bushfire rapid risk assessment</li> <li>• Recommendation 18: Ecosystem rehabilitation and restoration</li> </ul>
3	That the Australian Government, in conjunction with state and territory governments Investigate a national remote area firefighting capability, to support Australian fire agencies.	<p>Coalition Senators <b>do not support</b> this recommendation because state and territory governments have primary responsibility for responding to bushfires.</p> <p>Where the scale of an emergency or disaster exceeds jurisdictional response capacity and capability a state or territory may seek Australian Government assistance.</p>	<p>Tasmania acknowledges that state and territory governments have primary responsibility for responding to bushfires.</p> <p>Specialised firefighting capability is important to protecting the TWWHA's natural and cultural heritage values. This specialised capability and equipment (including communication facilities, firefighting equipment and weather data observation stations) is key to effective initial attack, containment and suppression in the TWWHA.</p> <p>This issue was considered by the TWWHA Bushfire and</p>

			<p>Climate Change Research Project, which found that increased bushfire risk will place pressure on Tasmania's firefighting capability in coming years, a sentiment echoed by the Senate Inquiry Report. Further, the Research Project's Final Report provides that the Tasmanian Government should develop a statewide program of investment in facilities and equipment to enhance fire management capabilities in the TWWHA (Recommendation 8).</p> <p>The Tasmania Fire Service will work with the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) through the National Resource Sharing Centre to ensure arrangements for the sharing of remote area firefighting capabilities remain contemporary.</p>
4	<p>That the Australian Government commit to long-term funding for the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) of an amount that is equal to the government's current contribution (rising with Consumer Price Index).</p>	<p>Coalition Senators noted that the Australian Government provides \$14.8 million each year to NAFC, plus \$0.5 million one-off funding for the 2015-16 fire season.</p> <p>Ongoing support for the NAFC will continue to be managed through normal Budget processes</p>	<p>Strategies and tactics that are regularly used in firefighting in the TWWHA include rapid attack by helicopter inserted crews, aircraft water bombing and use of fire suppression chemicals.</p> <p>The Tasmanian Government is a party to the cooperative funding model relating to the NAFC.</p> <p>The significant investment in aerial firefighting capability must be supported by research into the efficacy of aerial fire suppression techniques.</p> <p>This issue was considered by the TWWHA Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project, which provides that the defensive strategies used in the TWWHA, particularly for protecting people and built assets, are broadly similar to those employed in other states and territories. In light of this, there may be potential for operational systems and</p>

			<p>techniques used in other parts of Australia, and countries such as Canada, to be introduced for the TWWHA.</p> <p>Four recommendations from the Research Project's Final Report may relate to this issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation 12: Fire suppression techniques and methods</li> <li>• Recommendation 13: Aerial fire suppression</li> <li>• Recommendation 14: Research on fire suppression chemicals</li> <li>• Recommendation 15: Use of fire suppression chemicals</li> </ul>
5	<p>That the Australian Government recognise the need to enhance protection and conservation efforts in the TWWHA by increasing funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, for appropriate management activities and resources; and</li> <li>• for research projects aimed at providing qualitative and quantitative data specific to climate-related and ecological threats to the TWWHA (including dry lightning strikes).</li> </ul>	<p>Coalition senators referred to their response to recommendation 2 and cited the Tasmanian Government's \$25,000 <i>Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project</i>.</p> <p>Coalition senators acknowledged the importance of qualitative and quantitative data in managing landscapes across Australia.</p>	<p>This issue was considered by the TWWHA Bushfire and Climate Change Research Project, which provides that increased bushfire risk in the TWWHA will place pressure on Tasmania's firefighting capability in coming years, and highlights the importance of an ongoing program of scientific research and monitoring to understand the evolving relationship between climate change and the vulnerability to fire of natural and cultural values in the TWWHA.</p> <p>A number of recommendations from the Research Project may relate to this issue including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendation 5: Research on fire and natural and cultural heritage values</li> <li>• Recommendation 7: Lightning and ignition detection</li> <li>• Recommendation 8: Capital investment</li> </ul>
6	<p>That the Australian and Tasmanian Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop options to increase</li> </ul>	<p>Coalition senators do not support this recommendation.</p>	<p>The Tasmanian Government is satisfied with the current cooperative arrangements between the Tasmanian and Australian Governments for management of the TWWHA,</p>

	<p>cooperation to ensure the TWWHA is protected and conserved in line with Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work together to ensure strong provisions to protect the TWWHA from bushfire risks are included in the <i>TWWHA Management Plan</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident the Australian and Tasmanian Governments are meeting obligations under World Heritage Convention.</li> </ul>	<p>and is satisfied that it is meeting its obligations under the World Heritage Convention.</p>
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