

# Bombers tackle fires

By BAZ RUDDICK

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**BIG BIRD:** A DC10 water bombing air tanker dumps a load over a fire.

AHEAD of increased weekend winds and gale warnings for Monday, the Tasmania Fire Service has sought the assistance of Victorian firefighters and the three large air tankers they have contracted from the US.

A DC10-bomber, C130-bomber and an Avro RJ85 flew across Bass Strait from the Avalon Airport in Melbourne and undertook strategic fire suppression operations on the north-eastern edge of the Pipeline Road in Mawbanna on Friday.

Tasmania Fire Service Public Information Officer Shannon Fox said the purpose of the water bombers was not to extinguish the fire, but rather as a precautionary measure to slow the spread of fire and assist ground crews in impending winds.

"It is used to suppress an active fire front and slow progress right on the edge of the fire or ahead of it," Ms Fox said.

While the DC10-bomber has been in Australia since November, its use on Tasmanian blazes has been limited due to inopportune weather conditions and other factors that would have rendered it ineffective.

"High winds would mean it is not as effective.

"You need the right tool for the right job and it wouldn't have really assisted before," Ms Fox said.

The large air tankers dumped water on the Pipeline Road fire just after 1.30pm on Friday.

A smaller Rockwell Turbo Commander 690B was used to lead in and direct the water bombing aircraft over the blaze.

Ms Fox said the optimal altitude at which to bomb was 200 feet.

The DC10 is capable of carrying 43,000 litres of water or retardant, while the other two aircraft are capable of about carrying 15,000 litres.

Ms Fox said the air tankers were stationed at Avalon so as to be centrally accessible to fire hot spots around the country.

All three aircraft carried out a single drop each on the Mawbanna fire before flying back to Victoria.