



TASMANIAN FARMERS & GRAZIERS ASSOCIATION

Mr C Stott

Dear Mr Stott

Thank you for your letter dated 7th August 2014, in which you outlined some concerns with respect to my comments regarding fuel reduction burning.

Firstly, and importantly, the article you have quoted from Tasmanian Times was neither written for, nor submitted to, that publication. It was published elsewhere and lifted by them without any consultation with me. I understand that's perfectly acceptable in the boundary-free world of the internet, but it is worth noting that the context has been removed.

We are of course aware of the issues surrounding potential environmental smoke hazards, although many of the adverse findings in relation to particulate matter refer to larger urban areas and are a direct reference to (fine particulate) smog haze. As you would be aware, fine particles are defined as being 2.5 micrometers or less. These are predominately produced by emission gases, vehicles and industrial and urban smog. They are not usually generated by agricultural land uses.

My comments were specifically related to managing fuel reduction burns for forest and bush areas. No mention was made of management of agricultural residue; and it was not my intent to imply any increase in such activities.

I was commenting on two proposals announced by the state government:

- A commitment of \$28.5 million to allow fuel reduction burning of treatable public land in Tasmania to be increased to 60,000 hectares per year. This is designed to replace the current fragmented approach to fuel reduction which is split between Parks, Forestry Tasmania and the Tasmanian Fire Service, with a new specialist Fuel Reduction Unit, to be located within the Parks department.
- Initiatives that will allow for increased fuel reduction burning on private land. They have outlined a "fuel reduction first" policy that will reverse the onus of proof when it comes to environmental impacts, and require it to be proven that a fuel reduction burn will have an adverse environmental impact for a permit to be denied.

To suggest that planned and controlled fuel reduction burns are the equivalent of industrialised smog and vehicle emissions does not stand up to scrutiny in the Tasmanian context. On the contrary, summer bushfires that have high combustible fuel loads pose a much more significant risk.

In our view, these initiatives will see the number and intensity of summer bushfires substantially reduced in the future.

I am sure I don't have to remind you that resulted in 173 people died in the 2009 Victorian bushfires; 414 people were injured, many of them severely; 7650 individuals were displaced; and over 5500 structures were destroyed including in excess of 2000 homes with a total economic cost of \$4.4 billion dollars. Sadly, these figures alone do not begin to describe the untold emotional cost of such an event.

Anyone concerned about the overall health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and its inhabitants should be supportive of any measures that will protect individuals, communities and our environment from the ravages of bushfires. They should also be supportive of these measures and seek to where possible contribute to reducing the bushfire risk.

We make no apologies for supporting planned and well-thought-out strategies that will assist in ensuring that Tasmanians never have to experience such a catastrophic event.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jan Davis', with a stylized, somewhat abstract shape.

Jan Davis
Chief Executive Officer
11th August 2104