



26 April 2020

Inspector-General for Emergency Management  
GPO Box 4356  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

### **48 Years a Timberman, 37 Years a Wild Fire Fighter**

My Company is listed on the State-wide External Plant Hire Panel, this has all details of Companies that have been certified to enlist for quick response of plant and personnel to respond with fire suppression. During this summer of 2019/20 from the very beginning of the fires in Victoria, in not receiving a call out from Incident Control Centre, I personally rang every Incident Control Centre that was under attack of fire from Corryong, Orbost and Bairnsdale, requesting deployment and did not get deployed for two weeks while the fires raged on endangering peoples lives and assets. My company`s equipment sat idle and my person power sat idle watching the state burn, we are not envisaging on what we could have saved but by having early deployment we could have contributed to savings peoples houses and assets. Two weeks is a long time in a raging bush fire, we do acknowledge we were then deployed to Mallacoota by Naval ship HMAS Choules on 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 to carry out Fire suppression works and are still working to this day carrying out works almost four months later. We don`t know why this took so long to deploy our equipment and man power, as you read through our submission you will see we have long term experience, and our Company works on the availability of first responder to bushfire impact. From our experience we would recommend to Government to work on in the future, is quicker response for first responders.

During the past two decades there has been huge pressure from environmental groups to increase National Park areas, without thought to being able to manage these, particularly in regard to fuel load. Of recent times people can`t stop bringing up the subject of climate change, this and Native Harvesting, these are implied to be the causes of these massive bushfires. May I point out there is one fundamental requirement to Fire, that is fuel!!!, with the huge increase in vegetation along with lack of rainfall in the past decade creates what was once was a wet forest to today a dry forest. The more vegetation that grows is impacting on our environment as the vegetation is drawing more and more water from the soil, changing the ecology which poses massive fire risk due to the dry load and dry vegetation. There is also a huge impact on our native Fauna, in a fire as catastrophic as we have just recently experienced, approx. 18.6Million Hectares, equating to 45 Million Acres, 89 Fatalities, 9,352 Buildings burnt, one of the largest the Country has ever experienced , there was also a huge loss of native animals, birds and our biodiversity, at this point I would like to add one comment here that Managed Native Harvesting poses absolute Nil loss of biodiversity, and manages fuel load in a mosaic pattern of which reduces risk of catastrophic fires. The Flora and Fauna will take decades to recover from these fires if ever they do at all.

Environmental groups are advocating saving vegetation will be our saviour, I have seen first hand the total destruction of locking up these areas to National Parks not being able to recover within the next 50 to 60 years, also no thought is given to cost and man power in being able to manage these Parks. In almost 50 years of Logging Native timber have I ever seen such destruction nor have the generations before me, there is very rarely an animal or bird harmed from logging yet Black Saturday and the fires of

this year 2020 has seen billions of animals and birds burn to death. These fires are so widespread there is no where for them to escape, where as with a logging coupe this is maximum size of 80 hectares at a time, taking on average a logging season to harvest (approx. 9 months), not 18.8 Million hectares in a shorter time frame as exemplified by this season over a small number of weeks.

Legislation has been put in place that the National Park areas cannot be utilised , the dangerous burnt trees are to be left standing in the forest creating fuel yet again for another devastation within as little as 5 years, these trees could be salvaged by managed forest practices to give funding to local communities, and go to environmental management of the Park areas. Over the past two decades the Government has lost its way manipulating and not listening to those who have the practical experience, those who have many generations of Forest Management knowledge and cumulative Fire experience, not always does a University Degree with a science background make you the most experienced, it has to be a combination of modern and known facts of past and present handed down from generation to generation. But also the Government is not listening to those in Industry with Science degrees and the knowledge to back my claims.

Increasing vegetation on river frontages is one of the worst scenarios for fire hazard, again I have seen first hand how a fire uses a river to gain momentum with unstoppable force, I personally have attended and fought alongside Parks, Melbourne Water and DELWP seeing the total destruction of the fuel volume alongside River beds where the water actually evaporates from the river, I have photographic evidence to prove this. The Yarra system and tributaries are prime examples of this devastation waiting to happen, they lead into towns with a catastrophic consequence at the top of the Yarra Valley, Victoria.

Black Saturday experienced the largest human loss in Victorian history, the fuel load is now again at a similar level as in 2009, no-one has taken heed of the last Royal Commission, how many Royal Commissions do we need for this Country to start protecting from fire.

As stated previously at this very moment in time our Company is continuing with fire suppression works at Mallacoota, so many people in the township have been impacted by this fire, if it wasn't for the fact that they had the sea to go to refuge, it is an absolute miracle people didn't die. We keep telling authorities what is causing these devastating fires, no-one really listens to those who know the Forest, especially those who have fought, lived and breathed fire fighting since 1983. It is claimed from environmentalist that young regenerating forest (up to 8 years after timber harvesting) is a greater fire risk than an older stand of forest, these in actual fact were found to be least likely to burn or to burn only at the lowest severity class as compared to an older forest burning at greater fire intensity , therefore breaking the stronghold of extreme fires as we have just experienced once again.

As a proud Australian , Forest worker and Fire Fighter on behalf of my Company I ask the Government , please review Forest Management encompassing all evidence, taking into account the economic, environment and fire suppression facts, not just taking information from an environmental prejudiced view, it is known there are scientists advising Government whom neglect to inform or report all relevant and up to date information.

Yours Sincerely

