



Local Government Association Tasmania

28 November 2011

Our Ref: KS/ MF
File No.:

Mike Brown
Chief Officer
Tasmanian Fire Service
GPO Box 1526
HOBART 7001

Dear Mr Brown

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Tasmanian Bushfire Policy. We have consulted with our member councils and further to the concerns we have raised previously in relation to vulnerable people and neighbourhood safer places (see Attachment A), the following comments are made:

Implementation

- The proposed status of the Policy and who will drive it, is not clear. It is noted that implementation, review and evaluation will be undertaken by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). A committee is unlikely to be an effective driver. Implementation should be driven by nominated staff in a responsible body, that report to the SEMC.
- The current legislative requirement under the *Emergency Management Act 2006* is for councils to develop and maintain Municipal Plans and take the lead role in Community Recovery. The Draft Bushfire Tasmanian Bushfire Policy will put an extra burden on Local Government. Emergency Management, within Local Government, has limited resources and it is not generally a full time position.
- Many council work with the Tasmanian Fire Service (TFS) to facilitate the delivery of bushfire awareness through use of community halls etc but Local Government has not been responsible for running the programs - this is the role of TFS. There needs to be a clear and consistent approach to awareness/training. The TFS are the professionals, not councils.
- Councils would like more advice from the TFS on how to protect bushfire prone communities, beyond the ad-hoc cutting of grass on private land.

Land Use Planning

- The draft Policy would benefit from an additional section that deals with the role of land use planning as a guide to councils in drafting appropriate provisions for planning schemes. It would provide a "head power" for bushfire risk mapping and the development of a Bushfire Code as part of the Tasmanian Planning Commission's Planning Directive No 1.

- There would be benefit in a reviewing the approach to distinguishing the various levels of bushfire prone areas (BPA) recognising that while numerous developments may meet the definition of a BPA, they are not necessarily equivalent in risks and management requirements. There is concern that the standard bushfire code is inadequate. Establishing varying degrees of bushfire prone risks will assist in land use planning decisions, but also in preparing appropriate response plans for specific communities / localities.

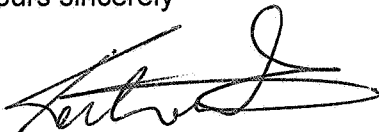
Vulnerable People

- Identification of communities at particular risk is critical. While Local Government has a role, it is felt that given this relates to specific fire risks, the Tasmanian Fire Service should be the driving force.
- As raised earlier it is unclear how Local Government could collect this information. There are many problems associated with the identification of vulnerable people in the community. For example,
 - Agencies operate in isolation and information is not shared, there is no central data base of people in the community with special needs etc
 - Privacy issues
 - This issue is a moving feast - who maintains the list and who takes responsibility for people who are not recorded or have moved etc .
 - Lack of access by councils to appropriate information.
- One suggestion was a self registration process which is centralised/state wide. This might be particularly useful given that bushfires don't always adhere to municipal boundaries.

Primary Shelter Options/ NSPs

- Councils are seeking greater input from the Tasmanian fire service in relation to the identification of contingency shelter options or nearby safer places – particularly the development of specific criteria for consideration.
- It is felt that because of the technical expertise required to assess the suitability of such places that the Tasmanian Fire Service must play the pivotal role with support from councils.
- Identifying which localities require a NSP may also be the first stage as it may not be feasible/necessary to identify these for all settlements, but only certain locations where the risks exist

Yours sincerely



Dr Katrena Stephenson
POLICY DIRECTOR

CC: Damien Killalea



Local Government Association Tasmania

31 October 2011

Our Ref: KS/MF
File No.:

Mike Brown
Chief Officer
Tasmania Fire Service
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Hobart 7001

Dear Mike

Thank you for your letter dated 17 October regarding the Draft Tasmanian Bushfire Policy.

While I note your comment that the draft is consistent with the approach adopted by the Victorian Government, based on the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, our Local Government colleagues in Victoria have provided us advice which will be of interest to you and should be discussed in relation to the draft strategy.

In relation to the register of vulnerable people - the Victorian Government chose to take a different approach to that recommended in the Royal Commission final report. This was largely a consequence of councils expressing concern about their capacity to maintain registers of people who are otherwise not interacting with councils through one of their services. In particular:

- a. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has taken the lead.
- b. DHS has asked their funded agencies/ service providers to assess their clients to identify the most vulnerable, unsupported individuals, and to keep that list on hand to provide to the police – who are responsible for evacuation. They're stressing that there is no guarantee of evacuation.
- c. There is no single list of individuals and there is no opt in mechanism – each agency will hold their own list.
- d. Agencies have been asked to supply councils with a 24 hour contact for the person who has access to the list.
- e. This list of 24 contacts should be included by councils in Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) .
- f. DHS has also done a lot of work to tighten the definition of vulnerable in the context of bushfire - this will be released shortly.

This is an important shift given that in Victoria councils are a very large provider of disability and in-home community care services, so they are in a position to at least contribute the details of existing clients Tasmanian councils have nowhere near the same level of responsibility or access to this subset of vulnerable people.

In relation to Neighbourhood Safer Places we strongly urge the continued program of identification by the Tasmanian Fire Service prior to Local Government taking responsibility. In Victoria the first assessment is by the CFA using their 'radiant heat assessment guidelines'; the second by councils in consultation with their Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees using criteria set out in their Municipal NSP Plan.

There is work to be done to support councils in this area in relation to use of private or Crown land. In Victoria a deed of consent for private landholders has been developed and consent protocols have been negotiated with the Departments of Education and Sustainability and Environment for use when the land is Crown land. The Municipal Association of Victoria is happy to share these with us but they would need some assessment in the Tasmanian context and we would seek State Government support in that context.

The Victoria CFA has also developed, in consultation with Local Government a software system that tracks and assists with the designation, annual review and notification requirements.

Our advice is that there are just under 200 NSPs in Victoria and it's been a difficult and unpopular process. It is difficult and expensive to establish them in high risk towns, and the State has provided about \$2.5k for most sites (although some identified high risk towns have been pre-allocated in excess of 1 million for single sites that require significant works). Based on the Victorian experience, we believe an injection of State Government funding will be required to support the establishment of NSPs in Tasmania.

We are currently consulting more broadly with our member councils on the draft Policy with a view to providing more comprehensive feedback prior to the SEMC meeting on 8 December. At that time, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss further issues related to implementation of the proposed policy.

Yours sincerely



Allan Garcia
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER