

**From:** Simon Warriner [<mailto:swarriner749@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, 7 December 2015 8:54 AM  
**To:** Jaensch, Roger (DPaC); roger.jaensch  
**Subject:** Tas Fire Service inquiry

Roger,

Please consider this as a public submission to the inquiry into the readiness of the TFS to deal with bushfire events. You were going to get back to me with the process to make submissions, but I have not heard anything as yet.

I have previously made reference to the need to make early decisions to use aerial attack on vegetation fires in inaccessible locations. My accepted submission to the 2013 bushfire inquiry focused on this matter, and was informed by my observations of the fire in the Inglis River Valley below Takone that started on Jan 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

It was with interest that I read the report in the Advocate of 1/12/2015 about a fire in the Fern Glade Reserve.

It took from "shortly after 9:40am" until 1:30pm to get the helicopter to the fire and another 20 minutes to get water on to the fire. We should all be thankful that the predicted winds did not eventuate during that time. The intervening 4 hours are an opportunity for things to go wrong in the sort of ways that sell books, make inquests interesting and wreck lives. They represent a risk that should be avoided. Early use of aerial attack is how to avoid that risk.

This event raises a number of questions your inquiry might like to ask of those running the TFS.

- 1            At what point did it become apparent a helicopter was required?
- 2            Who made the final decision?
- 3            Was that person the incident controller?
- 4            If not, why not?
- 5            Why was a helicopter not called immediately it was clear that the fire was inaccessible to wheeled vehicles?
- 6            At what time was that fact known?
- 7            How long would it have taken for the helicopter to contain the fire if it had been called immediately the fire was called in?
- 8            What resources could have been left in station in that scenario?
- 9            What would have been the final cost in that scenario?
- 10          What is the protocol used by the TFS to determine when to use aerial attack resources?

11           Has the TFS done any detailed analysis of the probable outcomes of using aerial resources immediately a vegetation fire in inaccessible terrain is called in? The Inglis River Valley fire previously mentioned would be an excellent case study, especially as two very senior fire fighters stood looking at it and one made the comment in the presence of myself and Terry Banfield, that "it was only a little fire, leave it til it is big enough to fight properly". That fire took days to extinguish, and a lot of helicopter hours were flown at \$2,500 for each hour. The helicopter did not arrive until at least 4 hours after the fire was called in.

12           What arrangements does the TFS have to access helicopters at short notice and what are the expected response times across the state?

14           Does not the failure to manage that slow moving, relatively simple disaster show a distinct inability in the organisation to understand the "stitch in time" mantra so critical to the effective response to unfolding disaster by an emergency service.?

There is a danger all fire response services face. That danger is the one that should be foremost in the minds of anyone conducting an inquiry such as this one. It is demonstrated very clearly in the comment witnessed by myself and Terry Banfield on 4 th January on my property on West Calder Road.

That danger is the presence in the organisation of people whose interest is in fighting fires, as opposed to putting fires out or protecting the community from fires. All fire service personnel exist on a spectrum that ranges from just wanting to put fires out all the way to full on arsonists. The job of those overseeing these organisations is to ensure that those running the organisation at an operational level are as far toward the "putting fires out" end of the spectrum as possible, and to be alert for any and all signs that this may not be the case.

Your sincerely

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