



City of **HOBART**

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NH: RM

8 January 2016

Mr Todd Buttsworth

Secretary

House of Assembly

Parliament House

HOBART TAS 7000

Via Email: communitydevelopment@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Buttsworth

INQUIRY INTO STATE FIRE COMMISSION

I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

As a major land owner, the City is fully cognisant of the risk of bushfire to its community including implications to life and property. As a consequence, the City commits significant resources to planning and on-ground works to mitigate these risks.

Recent fire management planning undertaken by the City has recommended the aggregation of burn units (areas treated by individual fuel reduction operations) for operational efficiency in order to maintain fuel levels within prescribed limits. The recommended burn units of 20 to 30 hectares in size are significantly larger than those previously undertaken. Given the complexities and risks of undertaking burns of this scale within urban and peri-urban areas, the City will require assistance in terms of both funds and resources to implement these plans.

The City recently conducted burns of 40 and 60 hectares in size as part of its Spring 2015 Burn Program. This was only possible through the supporting resources of the Fuel Reduction Program as provided by the Fuel Reduction Unit. With the increasing need to conduct such burns regularly, the City calls upon the Fuel Reduction Program to be continued and resourced adequately.

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The fire management planning work recently undertaken has also concentrated on developing a methodology for quantifying the width of fire breaks (Asset Protection Zone1) adjacent to houses and other assets. Such zones provide a permanent line of defence and, unlike fuel reductions burns, their maintenance is not so highly dependent on favourable weather conditions. That is, they can be relied upon to be in place prior to each fire season. The initial results of this work indicate that the width of the City's current breaks require expanding, in some cases substantially. Significant costs are incurred in the establishment of new Asset Protection Zones, whilst ongoing maintenance is lower, albeit recurrent.

On the basis of the role and degree of certainty fire breaks provide in the reduction of fuel, the City recommends that the Fuel Reduction Program is resourced appropriately to advise, support and provide resources to help with the establishment of more significant fire breaks, adopting a similar strategic and "tenure blind" approach as it has established for fuel reduction burns.

In terms of Community Safety Programs, the City believes the preparedness of individuals and their property is critical to mitigating the impacts of a bushfire. The City has worked closely with the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhood program, as a substantial part of bushfire risk management in Hobart since the program's inception. Our experience in working with the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhood program is that it is a highly effective program meeting a recognised community demand for this form of information delivered in accessible ways to build understanding and resilience. Therefore, the City wishes to see a continuation of sustainable funding for the program.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment. Further clarification on the issues raised can be provided by the City's Group Manager Open Space, Mr Robert Mather on 6238 2443 or via email hcc@hobartcity.com.au.

Yours sincerely



(N. D. Heath)
GENERAL MANAGER