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Your Ref:

Our File:



1 December 2016

Mr Mike Blake
Review Investigator
Government Flood Review Team
GPO Box 308
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Mike

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and comment on the terms of reference relating to the Government's review of the June 2016 floods. I will provide comment on points that relate to Forestry Tasmania (FT) and an overview of the impact this incident had on FT interests.

FT is responsible for sustainably managing approximately 800,000 hectares of public production forest (Permanent Timber Production Zone Land). The primary responsibility of the organisation is to undertake forest operations for the production and sale of forest products from these forests (including at least 137,000 cubic metres of high quality sawlogs and veneer logs per annum).

The flood event you refer to presented both immediate operational challenges and significant damage to assets that are still being dealt with.

There was a major disruption to harvesting over this period, particularly in the North East Region. Most harvesting operations were suspended due to the wet conditions for up to 2 weeks while we waited for the ground conditions to dry out to ensure there was no damage to soils. Emergency road maintenance was undertaken to access harvesting operations, or in some cases alternative coupes were required to replace coupes that could not be accessed. All told, the total impact on non deliveries to customers was 6,000 tonnes of all wood products.

FT manages a road network in excess of 13,000km of which approximately 120kms of forest road was affected by flood damage. This included 62 separate incidents of damage recorded to FT infrastructure including 30 culvert or ford crossing wash outs and 6 bridges damaged or washed away.

The estimated cost of repairs to the damaged roads (excluding Mersey Forest Road) totalled \$1.57million. The expected spend on repairs by Forestry Tasmania in 2016/17 is \$0.18 million with the remainder being deferred to future years (this does not include Tayatea Bridge or Lakes River Road). A CSO contribution of approximately half the 2016/17 flood repairs is expected. Most of the 2016/17 planned repair works by FT has now been completed.



Highlighted below are key FT assets damaged during the floods that attracted a high level of interest from various stakeholders in the Community.

Mersey Forest Road

- Whilst this road is not required for forest operations in the foreseeable future, it provides important access for the community and tourism operators in particular to access the Walls of Jerusalem.
- Mersey Forest Road was badly damaged in the June floods several major landslips and sections of the road surface and culverts washed away.
- The Tasmanian Government has committed \$3.25million in additional funding for repairs and the Department of State Growth is managing recovery works.
- Contrary to some reports, there is currently no safe alternative access route into this area for public vehicles. Although limited access via Gads Hill and Bare Hill roads has been made available for local land owners and tourism operators, this alternative is not open to the general public as these roads are not safe for tourist traffic. In addition, some of the road works on the Mersey Forest Road would also prevent all traffic from accessing the Walls of Jerusalem.

Tayatea Bridge

- The Tayatea Bridge at the North-Eastern end of the Tarkine Drive was damaged by floodwaters and debris in the June 2016 floods – and therefore had to be closed for safety reasons until repairs could be undertaken.
- Forestry Tasmania worked with contractors to arrange the necessary repairs, and the bridge re-opened for general use in mid-October 2016.

Lake River Road

- The Lake River Road provides access to the Big Den hunting areas and the following three structures were damaged by the floods:
- A log culvert at Flash Charlies Creek which has been severely undermined and requires replacement estimated at \$40,000.
- A second log culvert requiring replacement at an estimated cost of \$8,000; and
- Twin pipes at Top Den Creek that were washed out and destroyed and require replacement at an estimated cost of \$35,000.
- Forestry Tasmania has no harvesting scheduled beyond these structures in the next 3 years and as such this section of road currently serves no commercial purpose to FT.
- However if not replaced, the Big Den Ballot would not have been able to proceed this year which would have affected approximately 160 game shooters.
- The Government has therefore agreed that this is a Community Service Obligation road for 2016-17 and that FT will be funded up to \$83,000 to complete the required works.

Addressing the reference points

A) *The effectiveness of the strategies, preparedness and plans related to managing flood risk in Tasmania that were in place prior to the June 2016 floods occurring; including existing and potential levee systems.*

FT is a member of Regional Emergency Management Committee's in the North and North West, and is aware that flood events in the North are simulated for when these instances occur.

B) *Community preparation, resilience and awareness, including awareness of insurance matters, relating to major flood events in Tasmania.*

FT does not have a lead role in regards to community preparation for emergency management. Through FT's involvement in Regional Emergency Management Committees and the states Inter Agency Fire Management Protocol, our agency is aware of the Bushfire and Flood Communication Guide and the Tasmanian Visitor Information Network.

C) *The causes of the floods which were active in Tasmania over the period 4 – 7 June 2016 including cloud-seeding, State-wide water storage management and debris management.*

FT is not responsible for or has any involvement in water storage or cloud seeding but does have requirements to comply with the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code in relation to how forest operations are conducted to preserve natural values, particularly soil and water.

The primary method of preserving water is to retain vegetation in riparian zones along side water ways; therefore it would be unlikely that remnant debris resulting from historic harvesting operations on Permanent Timber Production Zone Land would have been a significant contributing factor to the resulting logjams.

Based on observations from FT staff that assisted with the removal of logjams, much of the material was thought to be from trees that had fallen into waterways over a period of time from natural causes, and the flooding event dislodged high volumes of this material resulting in log jams.

It was also noted by staff that there were plantations trees found in the logjams that were thought to be from privately owned plantations and established on ex agriculture areas that were affected by the flooding. Plantations owned and managed by FT were assessed following the floods and no significant damage or losses were detected.

D) *The use and efficacy of forecasting, community alerts, warnings and public information by authorities in responding to flood events.*

From FT's perspective messaging from the Bureau of Meteorology and Emergency Services provided sufficient information for our needs.

E) The effectiveness of transition from response to recovery in the week following the June floods; including capacity and priorities for infrastructure repair, and immediate assistance payments.

The transition from response to recovery was well managed.

In regards to the management of the incident, the only aspect that may have been improved is the disruption caused by the changeover of key taskforce staff with whom FT liaised with regarding the co ordination of recovery works. The impact of these changes was not significant, but it was noticed that improved handovers would have been beneficial in improving the efficiency of organising on ground works.

Funding arrangements for FT to conduct Community Service Obligation repair works on assets that are of importance to members of the public were resolved in a timely manner but did require specific Ministerial approval with no agreement in place as yet for 16/17. Proposed Service Agreement CSO works in the future, once agreed, will further enhance the efficiency of dealing with these issues.

F) Consideration of the detrimental environmental effects of the flooding upon the landscape, and what effective mitigation measures may be necessary to avoid similar events.

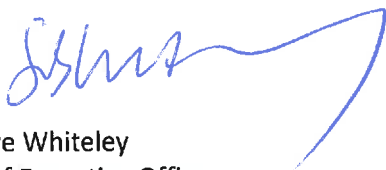
Consideration could be given to a program of a regular river debris assessment in catchments that contain critical state infrastructure, particularly after periods of low rainfall where there is insufficient flows to "flush" them. Consideration could then be given to instigating a program to physically remove debris that is at a level considered to be a concern.

G) And any other matters relevant to the terms of reference including matters relating to the floods in Huonville.

The Flood Recovery Taskforce sought FT's assistance to apply its expertise in forest operations to clear logjams and debris in the Mersey and Kimberley Rivers. FT staff was deployed for almost 200 hours assessing and supervising 2 local contractors with heavy equipment removing logs from these rivers.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or clarity on the comments provided.

Yours sincerely



Steve Whiteley
Chief Executive Officer