



*Photo courtesy of Jon Marsden-Smedley*

## **PART K – CONCLUSION**

The bushfires on 4 January 2013 were a significant emergency for Tasmania, especially the Forcett fire.

No person was killed by the fires, but there was substantial damage to property and the environment and economic, social and psychological harm to people and communities.

The fact that no person was killed should not simply be taken as an indication that the emergency management arrangements worked well. It is highly likely the preparedness of many people in the community and emergency warnings contributed to this outcome. In a number of respects the emergency management arrangements worked well. However, in a number of ways they did not.

Detailed comments have been made in the various parts of the report and it is not intended to summarise or repeat them in this conclusion.

Agencies and people with responsibilities for emergency management applied the model and the arrangements that were in place. However, these were not entirely suitable and not as ready for an emergency of this scale and complexity as they should have been. Moreover, there were some aspects of the emergency operations which can be improved.

To some extent, an emergency of this nature will test emergency management arrangements and find weaknesses. The conditions under which decisions are made in emergencies and the wisdom of hindsight also needs to be taken into account. Similarly, there will be ongoing developments in this field and arrangements will not always be up-to-date. Allowance has been made by the Inquiry for these factors in making judgements.

The emergency management arrangements can, and should, be improved to provide an appropriate level of protection and reassurance for the community. Many recommendations have been made for this purpose.

Two final comments and recommendations are necessary. First, resources need to be committed to improving the emergency management arrangements. Many of the problems are the result of not making these commitments in the past. To some extent as well, it may be a reflection of not having many significant emergencies in Tasmania, so that arrangements have either not been sufficiently tested or the management of emergencies has not been rigorously scrutinised. Nonetheless, resources should now be committed to undertaking the improvements needed.

Second, an independent means should be established to monitor and report on implementation of the approved recommendations, to ensure that appropriate action does occur.

*Recommendation 102 – that resources are committed to developing and implementing approved reforms to the emergency management arrangements.*

*Recommendation 103 – that an independent means of monitoring and reporting on the implementation of approved recommendations is established.*



Photo courtesy of Bernard Plumpton

