

FIREFIGHTERS AND VOLUNTEERS THANK-YOU RECEPTION
REMARKS BY
MR RICHARD WARNER
BALL ROOM, MONDAY 27 MAY 2019

Good evening and welcome to this reception to thank Firefighters and Volunteers attending the Tasmanian bushfires of last summer.

I am representing the Governor tonight as she is temporarily elsewhere undergoing treatment.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land, the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

Generally at receptions here I like to acknowledge VIPs, and other guests who may be described as being of significance to the particular occasion. However, were I to do that this evening I would be reading out just under 150 names! Which would then leave you very little time for anything else.

And so it is with the greatest of pleasure – and indeed pride, on behalf of the Governor representing all Tasmanians – that I sincerely thank each of you as individuals, and collectively as a group. And may I also extend that thanks to all those who are unable to be here. I understand up to 5000 people were involved in fighting fires this year.

A lightning strike ignited the Gell River blaze in late December 2018. As that fire developed it worked its way into inaccessible terrain.

Mid-January lightning storms made the situation much worse in southern Tasmania, setting alight very dry growth in hard to get locations.

Extraordinary satellite images revealed the extent of the increasing fires and smoke drift across southern Tasmanian wilderness and towns.

I remember vividly the 1967 bushfires and saw at close hand the aftermath of the more recent Dunalley fires. Being from the land myself I know well the strategies land owners take to reduce the risk of fire each season. However, it seems conditions are becoming more hazardous and complex each year

and I think there is a need for all involved to consider how to approach fire in the future.

Thank you for your courage, dedication in saving lives, property, livestock and domestic pets. Thank you for your skill and energy, over what was quite literally a long hot summer. You should be very proud of your achievements and so I repeat: on behalf of all Tasmanians, Her Excellency and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts.