



# View from Tasmania: 2016 Floods, bushfire preparation and sector capacity challenges

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# FIRE DISASTER

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## 21 known dead in South

**SOUTHERN TASMANIA** was turned into a stifling, roaring inferno yesterday as bush-fires claimed at least 21 lives, left thousands homeless and caused millions of dollars worth of damage.

Fires still roared in a few areas last night and an area of South Hobart close to the burnt-out Cascade Brewery was evacuated because of explosion threats.

Thousands slept on beaches, in the streets, parks, schools and anywhere else that they could make themselves even remotely comfortable.

Most of them watched virtually helpless as the raging flames engulfed their homes, farmlands, cars and other machinery.

It was a day of blind panic and amazing courage in the face of terrifying loss. This put complete control in the hands of the Police Commissioner (Mr P. W. Fletcher).

Three townships were annihilated — South, Callabreck and Collinsvale. Late last night, the deaths of 21 people in the South had been confirmed.

The Electronic Carbons works near South Hobart was one of the areas that could not be released until nearest relatives had been informed.

The scene throughout the South last night was still one of chaos and extreme heat. Mr Fletcher said the names of the dead could not be released until nearest relatives had been informed.

Despite the shocking loss, no one really knew to what extent the hundreds of fires had raged across the State's fire-prone areas. Two fire fighters died at Lenah Valley, two people at South Hobart, two at Honeysuckle and two at Kingston.

A typical example of the devastation was seen on the road between Tarcoona and Woodbridge, where 107 homes were gutted as well as a bridge and shops. Two people were also reported dead in a fire at Garden Is. Creek, nine miles south of Cyrenes, one is feared dead in a blaze at Kingsford Hill and another at South Hobart.

By early afternoon, the position had become so grave that an emergency meeting of Cabinet was called to ask the Governor (Sir Charles Gardner) to declare a state of emergency. About 10 people were seriously burnt at Honestyville, and five were seriously burnt at Lucanston, south of Honestyville.

Continued, F. 2



● THESE graphic pictures show the two angles of Hobart's disastrous fire yesterday. The top picture was taken from the south looking up the Derwent towards the 7000ft. cloud of smoke over the city. Bottom — Fire licks out a remaining timber section of a group of tenements in Waterworks Rd. Conynon. Brick fireplace pillars were all the fire left.

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For full details contact —  
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**ANSETT-ANA GOLDEN JET HOLIDAYS**

THE WEATHER BUREAU SAYS — North and North West: Fine, warm. South: Fine, mild. Forecasts, F. 32.

# Introduction

## Tasmania's major natural disasters:

- 1929 Tasmania Floods
- 1967 Tasmanian Bushfires
- 2013 Tasmanian Bushfires
- 2016 Tasmanian Floods



# 2016 Floods



- 2016 was the warmest year on record for Tasmania
- Significant June rainfall caused extensive flooding in the Mersey, Forth, Meander, North Esk, South Esk, Macquarie, Ouse and Derwent Rivers
- A subsequent flooding event in July resulted in the worst Huon River flood in twenty years

# Response of the NWCLC Inc.

- Residents of the Latrobe area on the North West Coast went to sleep on 5 June 2016 and awoke to water inundating their homes and businesses.
- Recovery Centre established in the township of Latrobe on 6 June.
- All service providers attended over days and weeks following the floods.
- Salvation Army, Centrelink, Latrobe Council, Chaplains, TasNetworks, RACT, Department of State Growth.



- The Senior Solicitor attended the Recovery Centre
- Handed out information packs
- Spoke to those organisations in attendance to ensure they were aware of our service and to refer those that may need legal assistance.
- Continued attendances at the Recovery Centre over the next 7 – 14 days.
- Contact with the Law Society of Tasmania
- Verbal MoUs with local private firms for facilitated referrals

# The Statistics & Problem Types



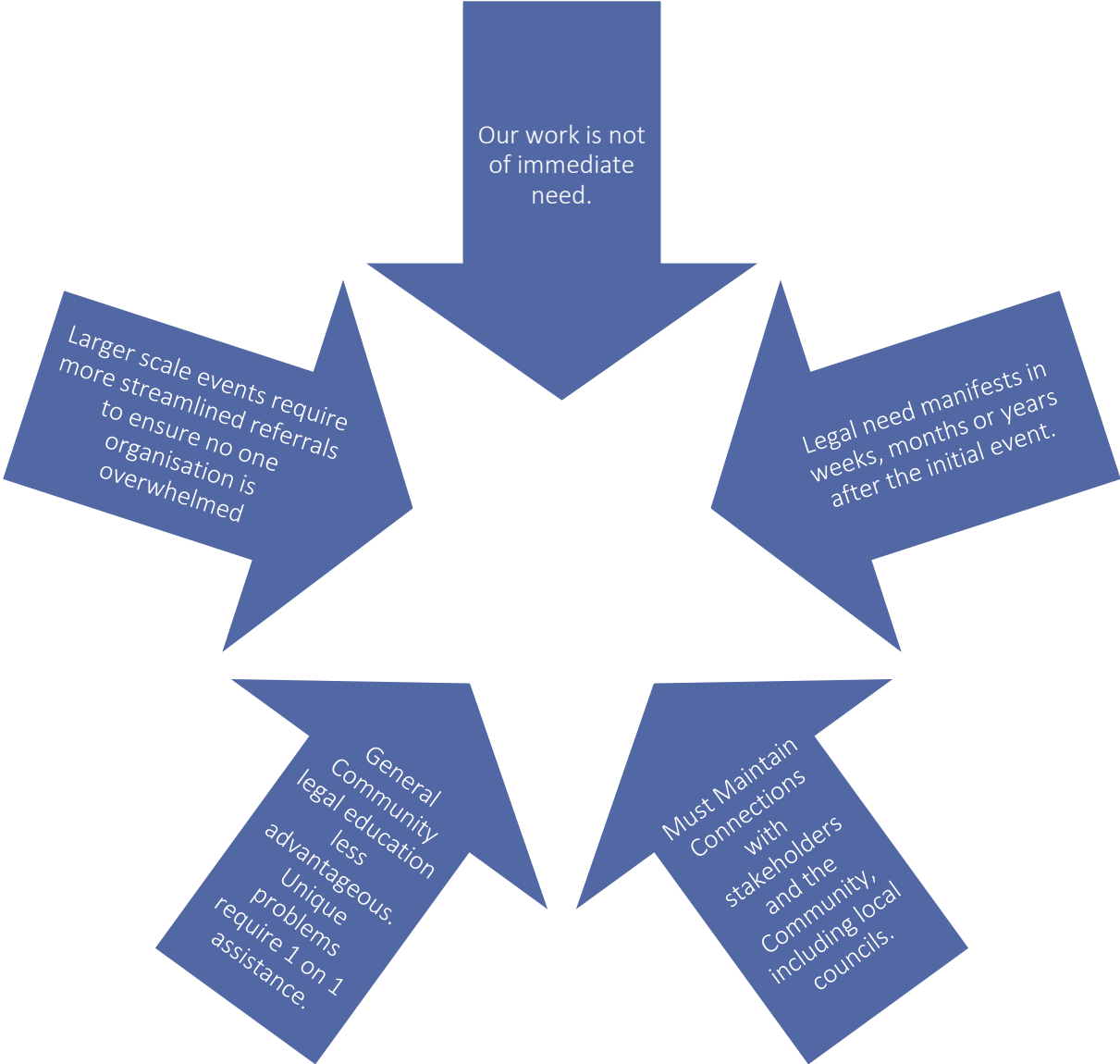
## Statistics

- 5 clients attend our service within 10 days of the initial event.
- Bulk of clients that attended were months, even years later.
- Last client which presented with a legal issue directly related to the flood events of June 2016 was seen by the NWCLC Inc. in late 2018.

## Problem Types

- Vast majority were insurance related (homes, cars, livestock etc.): no insurance, under insured, wrong insurance (no business interruption), difficulty completing claims
- Tenancy matters: referred to Tenants' Union of Tasmania, landlords having tenancy agreements ended prematurely.
- Planning Issues: extra requirements put in place for rebuilding.

# Lessons



# 2013 Tasmanian Bushfires – The Dunalley Experience



- The fire decimated a number of communities on the Tasman Peninsula during the afternoon of 4 January 2013.
- Catastrophic bush fire destroyed 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Dunalley including the School, Hall, Bakery, Police Station and its biggest employer, the Sawmill
- People initially concentrated on shelter and essentials.
- A few weeks later legal issues started to arise.
- Legal Services were provided out of the makeshift Information and Service Hub as well as the Community House.
- Factsheets were provided on topics such as how to replace important documents as well as fencing.
- Assistance was somewhat easier due to the lessons learnt from the 2009 Marysville fires in Victoria and 2011 Queensland Floods, particularly how insurance companies handled claims.



women's  
legal  
service  
tasmania



Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service



# The Tasmanian Response

## Tasmania's Emergency Legal Response Plan

- CLC Tasmania
- Tasmania Legal Aid
- The Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service
- The Law Society of Tasmania



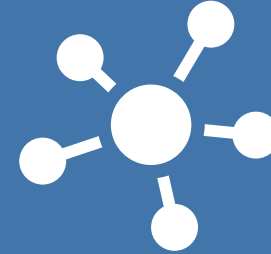
# Tasmania's Emergency Legal Response Plan



*“The coordinated process of supporting disaster affected communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing”*

(Australian Emergency Manual – Disaster Recovery, 1996)

Developed from drawing upon the lessons learned in the legal assistance responses to the Victorian bushfires of 2009, Queensland floods of 2010/11 and local experiences



- ✓ Activated by 2 or more members
- ✓ Describes how the legal sector will resource and coordinate
- ✓ All people affected by the emergency event covered by activation of the plan will be eligible for assistance.
- ✓ Utilise existing infrastructure such as the Tasmania Legal Aid Advice Line to direct clients to the appropriate service

Reviewed each 6 months at meetings of those members and maintained as a standing agenda item

