

Actions to improve forest fire management

Euan Ferguson

(On behalf of

Forestry Australia's Forest Fire Management Committee)

Prologue

“We have a continent to learn. If we are to survive, let alone feel at home, we must begin to understand our country. If we succeed, one day we might become Australian.”

- Bill Gammage - “The Biggest Estate On Earth”

Politicians

Governments

Fire management
agencies

Forest fire policy...

Many actors, many perspectives, many voices

Researchers

Media

Interest groups

Community
expectations

Discussed by Forestry Australia's Forest Fire Management Committee

- Many voices - dialogue shaped by reactive headlines
- Leading to short termism
- Diversity is good, but what we cannot see we cannot understand
- Action required to promote knowledge and understanding
- The need for foresight and understanding

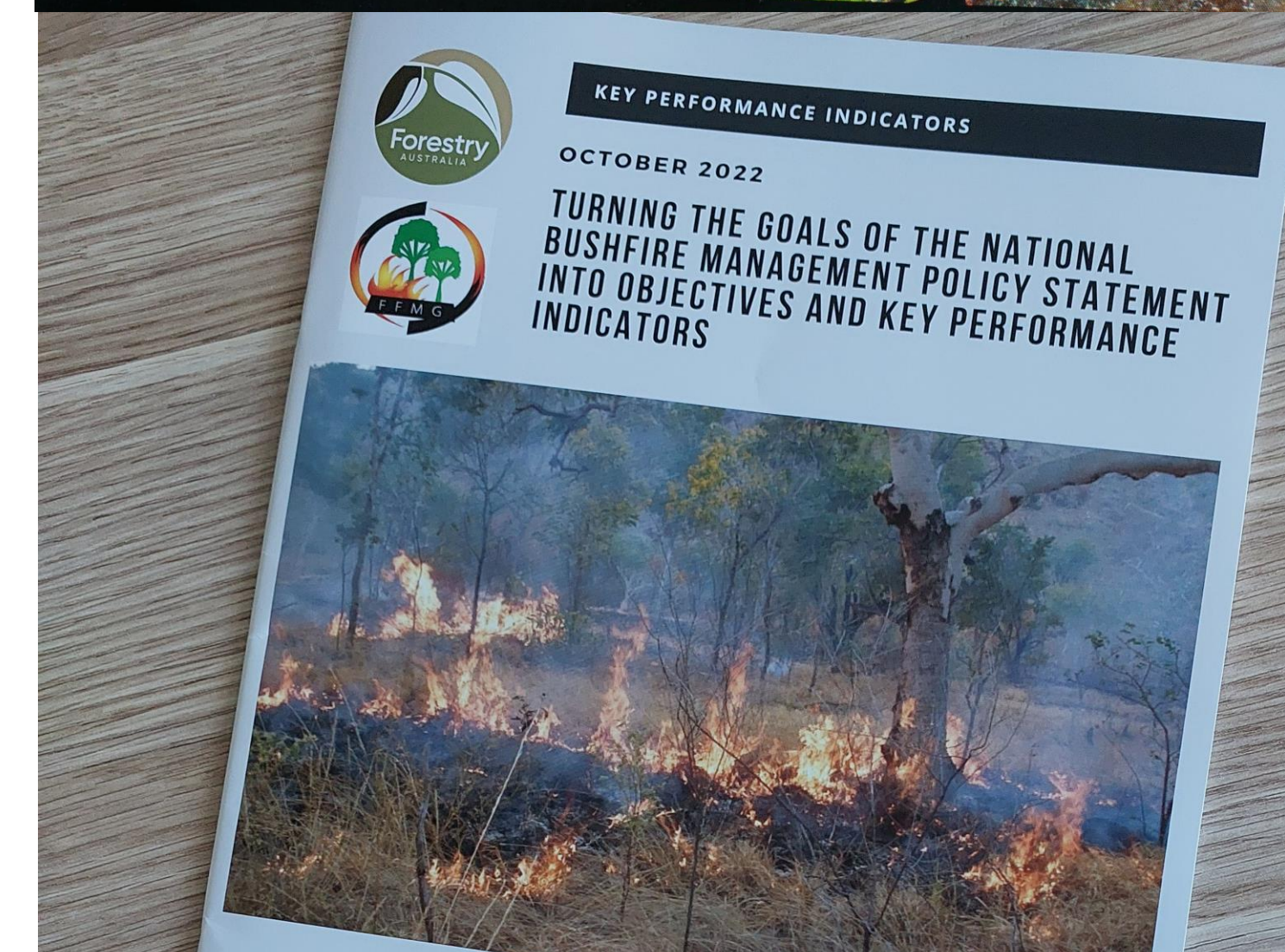
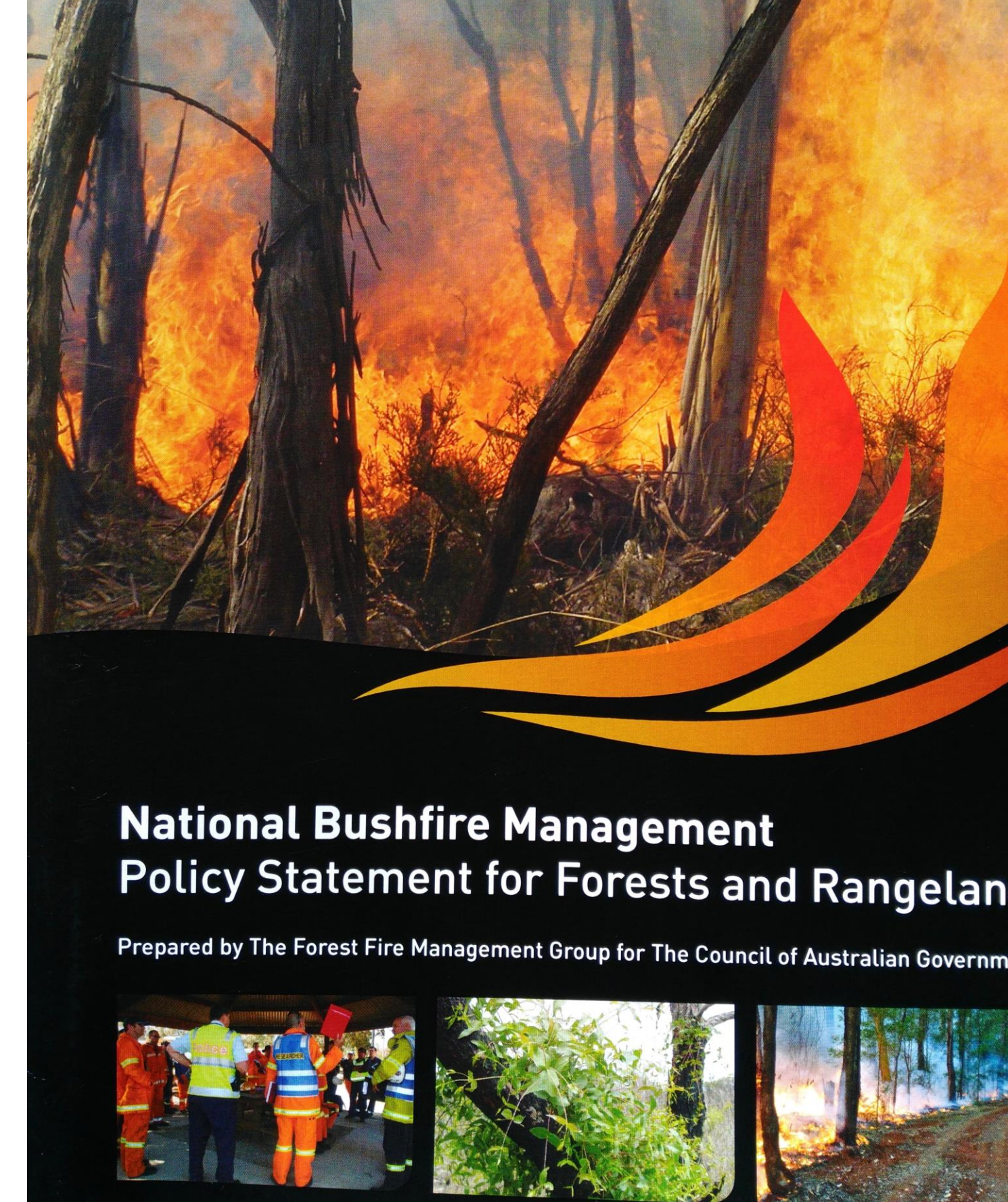


Objectives and KPI's

- *“National bushfire management policy statement”*
- and
- *“Turning these goals into objectives and key performance indicators”*

(Dr Kevin Tolhurst AM

Forest Fire Management Group & Forest Fire Management Committee of Forestry Australia)



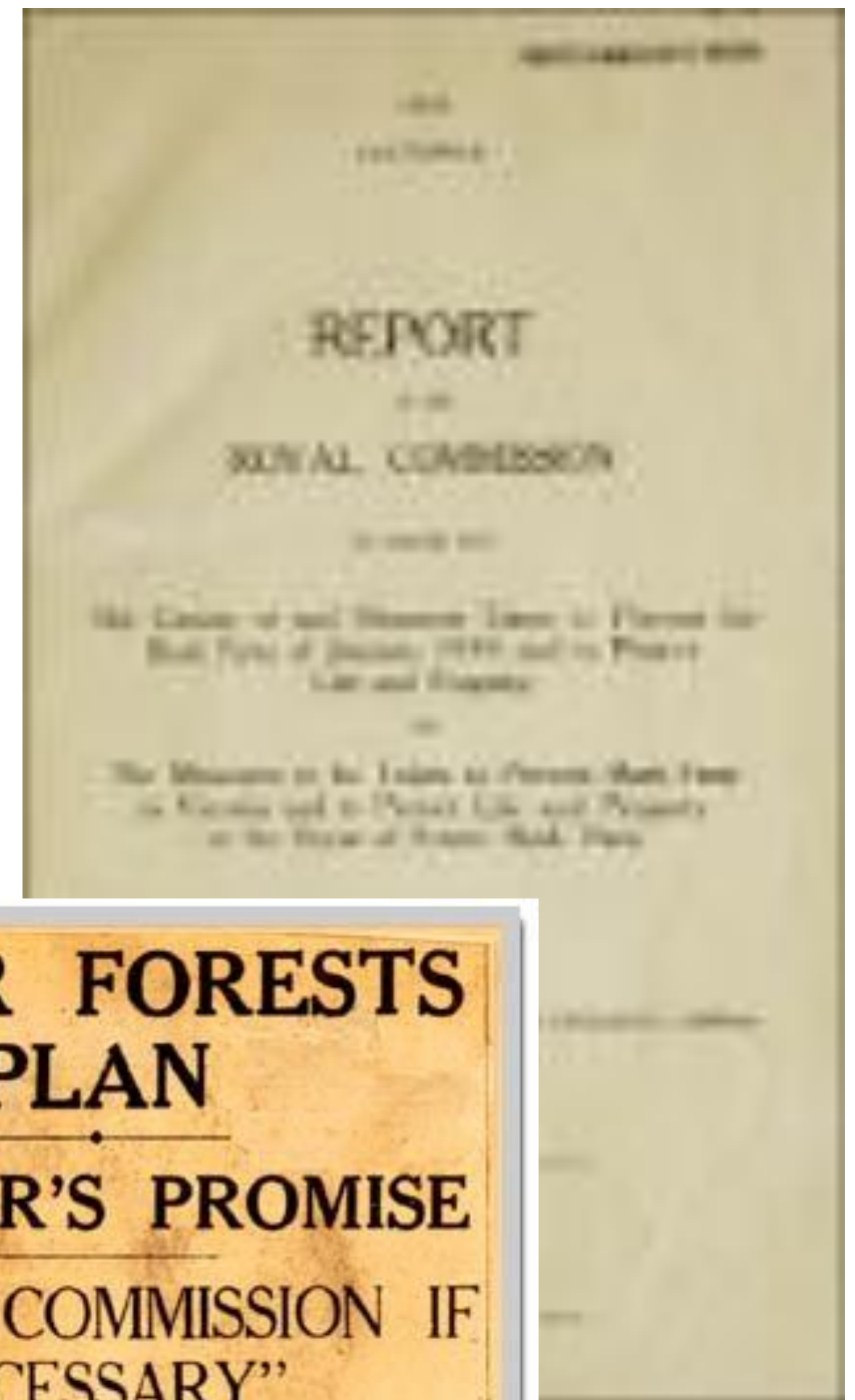
Forest Fire Management Committee proposal

- A need to promote the basics of forest fire (the “Pillars”)
- We found seven actions to promote good forest fire management
- Fill the knowledge gaps
- Actions would focus on improving long term communication, knowledge and understanding
- Do foresters have a key role?



Judge Leonard Stretton (1939 Bushfires Royal Commission):

“... though they felt the imminence of danger they could not tell that it was to be far greater than they could imagine. They had not lived long enough. The experience of the past could not guide them to an understanding of what might, and did, happen.”



**SAFER FORESTS
PLAN**

PREMIER'S PROMISE

**“ROYAL COMMISSION IF
NECESSARY”**

MODEL TOWNS PROPOSED

By OUR SPECIAL REPORTER

Legislation to compel the construction of specially designed dug-outs and other shelters in all timber areas would be considered by the State Cabinet immediately, the Premier (Mr. Dunstan) said yesterday.

Mr. Dunstan, who had just returned from a two-days' tour of bush fire areas, added that speedy rehabilitation of the milling industry would be one of the Ministry's objectives.

A Royal Commission to inquire into the fires and into forest control would be appointed if the Cabinet considered it necessary after it had heard a deputation

Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community



Smooth surfaces
Paint or refurbish dried exterior timber, repair nooks or crannies where leaves and debris can gather. Design pathways, driveways and lawns around your home to keep a clear area immediately around your home.

Roofing
Well-secured metal roofing is preferable. A tiled roof needs to be well fitted with fire-resistant sarking (fibreglass-based aluminium foil).

Walls
Choose non-flammable wall materials such as brick, mud brick and fibre cement. Vinyl weatherboards, rough timber and other cladding can warp or catch fire. Gaps in external roof and wall cladding need to be sealed.

Windows, crevices and vents
Spark-proof your home with bronze or stainless steel flywire screens on windows and doors, or install fire resistant metal shutters. Cover all wall cavities in fine wire mesh. Enclose areas under decks and floors. Screen vents in the roof space with fine wire mesh.

Sprinkler system
A home bushfire sprinkler system that directs water over the roof, windows, doors and underfloor areas is one of the most effective ways of protecting against radiant heat, direct flame and ember attack. Seek professional advice for design and installation.

Skylights
Install wire-reinforced glass or a thermo plastic cover on skylights as plastic can melt and glass can break in intense heat.

Property access
Gateways should be at least 3 metres wide and there should be clear access with a turnaround point for firefighting vehicles.

Gutters
Regularly clean gutters and remove leaves and bark from any areas where they can become trapped.

Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”



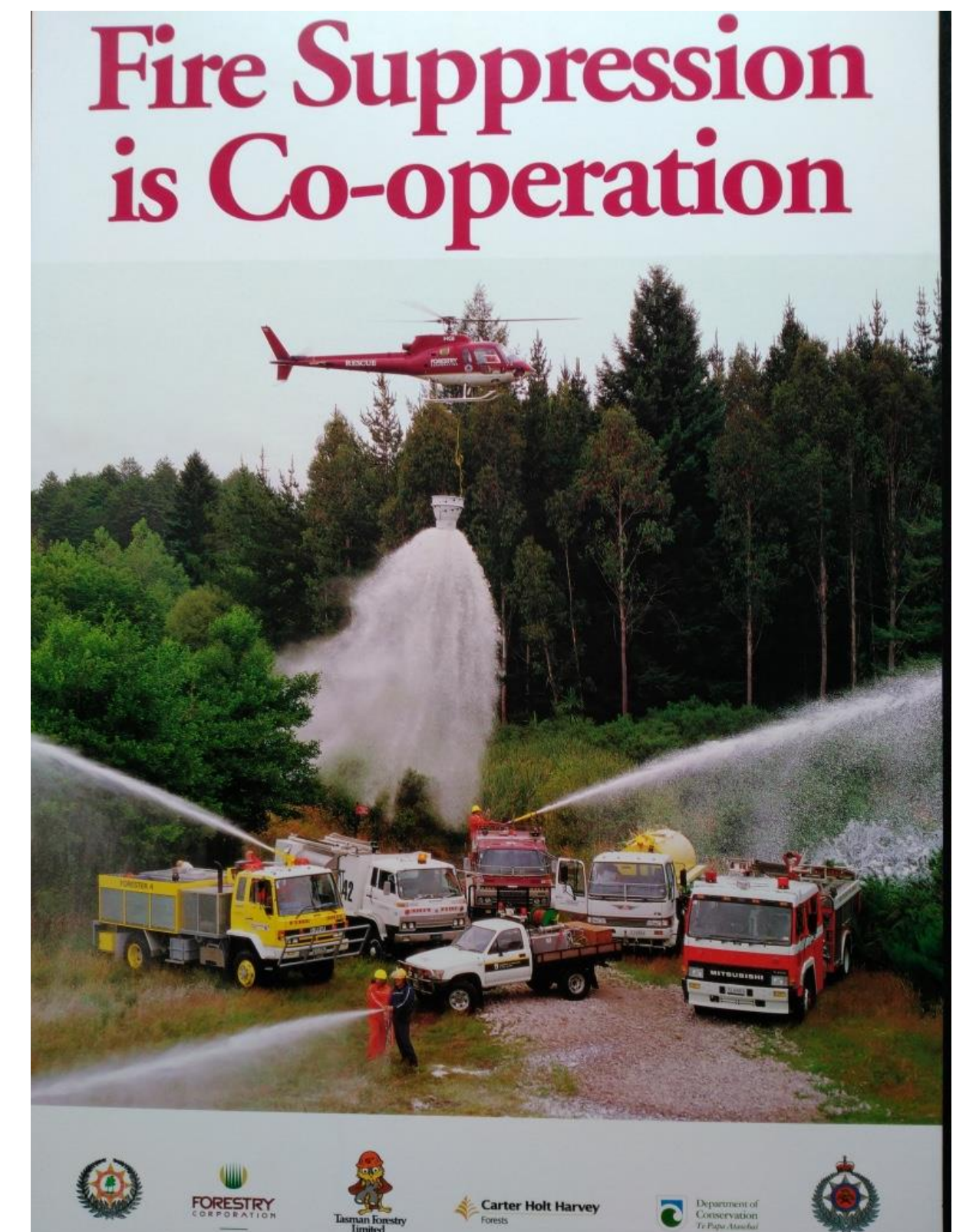
Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. **Keep unwanted fires small**



Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. Keep unwanted fires small
4. Fire people are competent and resourced



Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. Keep unwanted fires small
4. Fire people are competent and resourced
5. Fire management based on good science and “the art”



Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. Keep unwanted fires small
4. Fire people are competent and resourced
5. Fire management based on good science and “the art”
6. **Community fire leadership**



Forest Fire Management Actions

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. Keep unwanted fires small
4. Fire people are competent and resourced
5. Fire management based on good science and “the art”
6. Community forest fire leadership
7. Fire talk is respectful, effective and stimulates actions.



The role of traditional owners, foresters, forest fire managers, natural resource managers...) in fire?

- Landscape “country” view
- Intergenerational thinking
- Comfortable with a future uncertainty
- Forestry is “of the people”
- Foresters get things done...



Proposal

- Forestry Australia and Forest Fire Management Committee provide leadership
- In partnership with members
- And with communication stakeholders
- Develop a forest fire engagement and communication strategy.

Forest Fire Management Committee proposal

“Echo Chamber” Let’s continue the conversation ...

1. A prepared and resilient community
2. More “good fire”, less “bad fire”
3. Keep unwanted fires small
4. Fire people are competent and resourced
5. Fire management based on good science and “the art”
6. Community forest fire leadership
7. Fire talk is respectful, effective and stimulates actions.



Our forests are a measure of humanity. The legacy of our stewardship extends for generations. The burden of this responsibility is heavier than the tallest mountain.