

RESPONSE TO PETITION

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

PETITION NO 3 OF 2026

TITLE OF PETITION: DOLPHIN SANDS BUSHFIRES

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House:

1. The community of Dolphin Sands, near Swansea on Tasmania's east Coast is under protected by current fire management strategies.
2. In the last 16 years (November 2009 – 31 December 2025) at Dolphin Sands there were at least 23 Tasmania Fire Service callouts to fire incidents. 19 of these incidents became bushfires – 17 are understood to be a result of human behaviour, including escaped burn-offs, vacated campfires, other misbehaviour, and machinery use.
3. Since the bushfire of 4 December 2025, there have been a further 9 callouts for Swansea Fire Brigade to flare-ups and smouldering tree roots – a continued drain on resources and volunteers' time.
4. The financial, physical and mental costs of repeat and regular bushfires to residents and landowners is too high and can be mitigated with strategic, region-specific fire management.

Your Petitioners therefore request the House to enact legislation to prohibit the lighting of fires outdoors at Dolphin Sands at any time of the year.

GOVERNMENTS POSITION:

- Bushfire risk mitigation is a shared responsibility, with overall risk-reduction outcomes dependent on the contribution of all relevant parties across a range of strategies.
- Given the right combination of bushfire fuel and weather conditions, fires can spread rapidly and place people and property at risk.
- Fires are not an infrequent occurrence in the Dolphin Sands area, and the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) recognises that Dolphin Sands faces comparatively higher bushfire risk due to factors such as property preparedness, vegetation type, and fire safety practices.

- It is acknowledged that the local community has made many efforts over an extended period to both reduce local fire hazards and to proactively prepare their homes and other property for fires in the area.
- The Tasmanian community uses fire for legitimate purposes ranging from domestic needs such as for cooking and warmth, through to hazard reduction burns and land management.
- Any permanent restriction on the use of fire must be carefully balanced against established property rights and broader community needs.
- During periods of increased fire risk, the TFS already regulates the use of fire via the fire permit system and total fire ban declaration.
- Fire data indicates that, even if the intentional lighting of fires were eliminated, there would still be significant potential for ignitions due to arson, accidents, or negligence.
- Furthermore, the prohibition of fire would potentially disadvantage those wishing to manage fuel on their land and may impact the legitimate enjoyment of landholders and visitors.
- The TFS would not seek to impose a permanent total exclusion of fire in the Dolphin Sands area.
- The TFS is considering options to improve fire safety and is exploring the development of a community-supported bushfire plan. Exploration of these options will continue to occur, with information provided as this work progresses.