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## **\$1 MILLION UP IN FLAMES**

Last night in a cruel twist of fate approximately \$1 million worth of logging equipment in the Mount Beauty area went up in flames whilst the owner was off fighting fires in other areas said Timber Communities Australia (TCA) today.

“Peter McConachy, a harvesting contractor working in the fire ravaged areas from the 2003 Alpine Fires salvage logging has for the past two weeks shut down his harvesting operation to fight the wildfires in the North East along with 6 of his employees”, said Mr Gentle, Victorian State Manager of national grassroots community organisation TCA.

“Peter had moved most of his equipment onto the fire line leaving behind a Timbco Felling Machine and a Hitachi 270 excavator, worth approximately \$1 million in what was at the time the safe area of Big Hill near Mt Beauty.”

“For the past two weeks Peter has supplied 1 dozer, 1 skidder and 2 excavators as well as 6 men who have worked around the clock fighting the bushfires in the Buffalo and Mansfield areas, leaving his machinery in Mt Beauty unattended”, said Mr Gentle

The rapid development of a fire near Tawonga gap on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December saw almost 12000 ha burn in 2 days. Inside that 12000 ha was Peter McConachys equipment which was discovered late last night in it's burnt out state.

“This is a devastating blow to Peter and his crew, who were selflessly fighting fires elsewhere and were not aware of the Tawonga fires destructive impacts on their livelihoods.”

“This morning, as Peter travelled up to assess his equipment, he was horrified at the destruction of the fire on the regenerating forests that he has so carefully salvage logged over the past couple of years.”

“It's all gone was his words, all the hard work to regenerate the forests burnt in 2003 were once again at mother natures mercy and the areas is once again scorched earth.”

“It is important for the general public to realise that timber workers provide not only the expertise but also the heavy duty equipment for combating bushfires. Like other fire fighters they leave their families at home and work in dangerous environments for weeks on end to protect communities in the path of the fires.”

“With most contractors in the state fighting the fires, the industry has provided approximately \$30 million in equipment such as dozers, skidders and excavators, people must remember that people who work in the bush, care for the bush”, concluded Mr Gentle

For further information call Scott Gentle, TCA Victorian State Manager – 0438 556 020