

# **Wambelong Redbank Section 44 Bushfire**

**January 2013**

## **Compilation of Reports**



# Contents

Notes from Debriefs .....	4
Warrumbungle Shire Council Staff Debrief .....	5
Summary .....	5
Warrumbungle Shire Council Outdoor Staff Debrief.....	10
Rural Fire Service Debrief .....	12
Summary:.....	12
ANU Lessons Learnt Workshop Debrief.....	23
Summary: .....	23
Ministry of Police & Emergency Service Debrief .....	35
Summary: .....	35
Minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire LEMC Meeting Debrief .....	37
<i>Summary:</i> .....	37
Warrumbungle Recovery Committee Meetings.....	41
<i>Meeting 1</i> .....	41
<i>Meeting 2</i> .....	45
<i>Meeting 3</i> .....	50
<i>Meeting 4</i> .....	54
<i>Meeting 5</i> .....	57
<i>Meeting 6</i> .....	60
<i>Meeting 7</i> .....	63
<i>Meeting 9</i> .....	65
<i>Meeting 10</i> .....	68
<i>Meeting 11</i> .....	72
<i>Meeting 12</i> .....	76
<i>Meeting 13</i> .....	80
Mayors Fund Bushfire Appeal.....	84
<i>Overview</i> .....	84
Allocation of Funds.....	85
Figures of Donations to the Mayors Bushfire Appeal.....	86
Public Fund Rules .....	87
Guiding Principles Document .....	89
Advisory Panel Terms of Reference .....	91
Minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting .....	94
<i>Wednesday 12 February 2013</i> .....	94
<i>Thursday 7 March 2013</i> .....	96
<i>Tuesday 9 April 2013</i> .....	98
<i>Thursday 13 June 2013</i> .....	101
<i>Monday 8 July 2013</i> .....	104

<i>Tuesday 13 August 2013</i> .....	107
<i>Friday 17 January 2014</i> .....	110
Agency Reports .....	113
Mayors Report on the Wambelong Fire .....	114
Coonabarabran Disaster Recovery Centre.....	116
Coonabarabran Bowling Club .....	118
Robert Freebairn OAM Pasture Recovery Report .....	119
Recovery Co-ordinators Summary Report.....	122
Warrumbungle Bushfire Support Coordination Service Report.....	134
<i>Appendix 1 Bushfire Support Coordination Service – Service Manual V1</i> .....	143
<i>Appendix 2 Bushfire Support Coordination Service - Brochure</i> .....	184

# Notes from Debriefs

# Warrumbungle Shire Council Staff Section 44 Debrief

9.30am on 19 February 2013 at Town Hall

## Summary

- WSC Senior Staff talked about how each of their department was involved in the fire and what their roles were.
- Technical Services talked about the equipment used, staff issues / concerns, fuel issues, stop n go issues, width of fire breaks and operator safety, road closures.
- Corporate Services talked about the staff support in admin and to the RFS, public meetings, lack of communication, bowling club as an evacuation point and recovery centre, fire victims sleeping in cars, media inferring, cost of damage, Mayors fund, staff issues and catering.
- Environmental talked about being heavily involved in recovery, asbestos management and the tip involved as well as surveys sent to houses affected by the fire (slow response).
- Senior Staff and Councillors also talked about any problems or concerns they had including lack of communication, emotional well being of the staff, and disaster plan in force.

.....

**Present:** Steve Loane, Rebecca Ryan, Phil Southwell, Clr Shinton, Clr C Sullivan, Clr R Sullivan, Clr M Coe, Chris White, Jennifer Parker, Val Kearns, Glennis Mangan, Clr D Todd,

Clr G Andrews, Clr Capel, Clr Clancy, Stefan Murru, Mark McWhirter, Harold Sutton, Aileen Bell, Kevin Tighe, Michael Marks, Aaron Parker

**Apologies:** Tony Meppem

- Fire started in National Park on Saturday 12 January 2013
- Kevin Tighe was Councils LEMO
- National Parks (Mark Fosdick) 8.30am Sunday 13 January 2013 requesting for the grader
- Fire was contained until Sunday midday and as the afternoon progressed more resources were requested. By 6pm the fire had turned for the worst
- 1 fire in National Park, 1 fire in Pilliga, 1 fire in Redbank
- National Park fire was heading NW to needle mountain by lunch it was heading towards Siding Spring with a southerly coming from inland
- Aircraft were called in Sunday
- Clr Clancy asked – Was fuel at the airport available?
- Phil S – Did not hear about airport running out of fuel
- Clr Capel – When did people get message for evacuation?
- Steve – Approx. 4pm Sunday (confirmed by Mark McWhirter).
- It is noted that there were varying times of notifications as announced by different people in the meeting
- Glennis – Poor mobile reception posed a problem
- Kevin – VRA started door knocking about 3pm

## **TECHNICAL SERVICES REPORT – Kevin Tighe**

- On Sunday, Mark McWhirter was first on call
- Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday there were supervisors, crews, managers and admin staff in the control centre and out in the field 24/7
- Councils from Dubbo, Gilgandra and Mid Western provided support to Warrumbungle Shire Council
- Grader/utes were in the field. Control centre would request grader to go to particular points. Grader gets instructions from fire captain and ute was to follow grader
- Water tanks and stop n go was provided 24/7
- Power down at Baradine and Ben Smith arranged generators
- The dozer council had on hire was out on the fire ground. Mainly around the tv tower. There was only 1 operator for the dozer.

## **NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

- Harold – Mark was in the control centre disseminating information. At times it proved difficult for Mark to get information out to staff. There were indecisions of information from the control centre. Staff were told to go places but not without support ie firetanker and utes, but there were times that the support was not there. At one time the grader was supposed to be at Warkton but found out grader was at the Coonabarabran Council depot.
- Mark – Monday and Tuesday was absolute mayhem at the control centre which needs to be taken on the chin. Things need to evolve and this needs to be accepted
- Kevin – RFS had Caltex fuel cards but no Shell fuel cards. Fuel was just being booked up at the Shell and it was not until the Thursday that RFS had raised a purchase order. Kevin (LEMO) was the conduit for fuel.
- Rebecca – Stop N Go. How did they handle this and did they have authority?
- Steve – They needed more instructions. Council should have logged who and when people went through the barricade. Barricade should have been a police job
- Mark – At Stop N Go training they learn that they do not have the authority to stop traffic from going through the barricade.
- Clr Capel – Did you have enough operators?
- Kevin – Only 1 operator for the dozer. Council were running out of staff to go around the clock
- Harold – Staff from the southern end were assisting but the travel created longer hours
- Steve – Staff should have a 10 hour break for WHS reasons. This is the reason for taking up offers from neighbouring councils.
- Clr Coe – Up in the National Park the fire breaks only able to be put in 1 blade wide. Did this compromise staff – concern of staff safety. If this is the case it needs to be brought to RFS debrief.
- Harold – they then go back and put a larger break. 300m to give yourself a turning bay.
- Steve – allows tankers to go in
- Harold – Tooraweenah on Wednesday was a concern. They had to get out.
- Steve – When a section 44 is declared the ground belongs to RFS. Council then becomes part of the chain of command.
- RFS pays the plant hire for the Dozer

## **CORPORATE SERVICES REPORT – Rebecca Ryan**

- Provided admin support – scribing duties and comm's
- Scribing follows Incident Controller / Operation Controller
- Created a drain on Council's normal operations
- Public meetings started on Tuesday, Mayoral fund in progress
- Found it difficult to get information from RFS
- Chris - MPES was good on getting information. RFS referred to website. Public meetings were coordinated by RFS.
- Staff told to break and that WSC staff need to manage time control
- Staff left in office assured their role is important
- Approach RFS about training "pool of back up volunteers"

- Steve – operational / financial drain on Council
- Steve – Should RFS directly hire temps? Council need to provide staff per agreement.  
Rebecca – Communications improved as the week went on
- Since 2006 there has been change in staff. Suggest that each September talk with staff about fires – need to do this internally
- Auditing – job numbers created
- MPES on hand Tuesday which was great assistance
- Clr C Sullivan – when RFS called meeting who did they expect to attend
- Steve – anyone wanting information. RFS Public Liaison Officer chair public meetings
- Chris White – two way forum for those who evacuated and a social aspect. RFS ignored Chris's request to communicate
- Steve – Bowling club established on Sunday as an evacuation centre
- Chris White – found public meeting informative as she could find out what issues the community had
- Clr Capel – when were people informed that their house was lost
- Steve –RFS were handling that notification
- Rebecca – list of lost property / houses was quite difficult to obtain
- Phil S – RFS had two GIS officers on Monday. They were given a brief if they found a mattress or springs they were to deem it a dwelling
- Steve – a lot of restrictions around privacy
- Rebecca – during S44 need confidence in other agencies to share info with council
- Rebecca – now dealing with insurance claim for infrastructures
- Clr Todd – why couldn't helicopters drop people in
- Steve – asbestos concern
- Clr Shinton – houses still hot and dangerous
- Mark – RFS and arson squad had to investigate before people could go home
- Clr Clancy – people should've been told it was a coronial inquest. There were approx 20 people sleeping in cars. Tuesday 1.30pm was the first transmission he received about the fire
- Steve – apologises we will do it better
- Clr Capel – agreed with Fred that didn't want to interfere but would've helped if asked
- Chris White – disaster welfare to talk to Council about what we were doing but very hard to get information
- Steve – situation is an evolving thing. RFS then started using their own resources so our assistance in the Comm's room diminished and our staff became freed up
- Clr R Sullivan – Bowling Club needs to be acknowledged
- Kevin – surprised to hear people sleeping in cars. Requests were made to open youth centre but no use was made of youth centre
- Steve – Kevin contacted bowling club to see if they would open up as evacuation point
- Aileen – Evacuation centre received calls from worried families but could not provide a central phone number to contact evacuees
- Chris – Disaster Recovery is responsible for this but did not provide the service
- Clr C Sullivan – Media trying to get the sensational shot became disturbing to people on the ground. Other than that they didn't seem to be in the way
- Glennis – landholders were being annoyed by them, they had to lock gates
- Steve – reported it to the police and it appears after they were spoken to they backed off
- Stefan – establishment of Mayors fund. MPES assisted with setting up rules and made aware of risks
- Clr R Sullivan – Do we cover Gilgandra Shire
- Steve – if anybody is affected by the Wambelong fire they will benefit from Mayor's fund
- Aaron – in Gilgandra Shire no houses were lost but were sheds lost
- Steve - \$400,000 damage – mostly in National Park (Gilgandra Shire)  
No figure can be put on WSC and what was lost

## **ENVIROMENTAL REPORT – Michael Marks**

- Heavily involved with recovery
- Affect of the retardant
- Doing a survey to find age of houses, what had approval or didn't, what types of dwellings
- Glennis – inconsistencies in list but it never changed
- Steve – One particular body did not manage the lists
- Michael – Asbestos and the tip; Public Works / EPA / Workcover / MPES / NSW Health brought asbestos management plan together
- Steve – NSW didn't have a friable asbestos management plan that they could use
- Michael – Public Works engaged a consultant for air monitoring but the results were inaccurate. The initial results raised great concern. If asbestos considered friable whole area plus soil considered dangerous. EPA met Council and identified a plan. EPA confirmed that tip can take asbestos
- Steve – Minister Parker fast tracked EPA licence. Asbestos from Siding Spring is going to Dubbo 500 – 600 cubic metres
- Michael – The holes at tip, cell 1 approx 50m x 30m and 3m deep of material. Cell 2 approx 50m x 20m and 3m deep of material.

## **ASSESSMENTS – Aaron Parker**

- Aaron – surveys sent to houses. 51 houses – still waiting for 39 surveys. 1980 to 2000 samples taken from houses and tested. 9 uninsured with asbestos. \$1.7 million estimated to clean up not including fees at tip
- Michael – EPA have allowed decontamination on some products
- Steve – sunset clause
- Clr Coe – is this restricted to fire victims only?
- Aaron – yes
- Clr Clancy – specialised vehicle?
- Aaron – yes. Sealed. Designated tipping times
- Clr Andrews – who deems the clearance?
- Aaron – Hygienist will supply clearance certificate. Special licence to do so. Council are the conduit for this
- Clr Capel – Do we have staff trained asbestos?
- Aaron – Yes, Aaron is trained. No staff accredited for friable asbestos

## **STAFFING**

- Staff involved:  
Mark McWhirter – Comm's Centre  
Admin staff – scribing  
People out in the field  
Val – no 12 hour shifts – it was over the top
- Mark – had to run in line with RFS. Maybe accommodate at centre only rather than in field

## **STAFF COMMENTS / PROBLEMS**

- Michael – not clear on what time off or time in lieu was to be followed
- Rebecca – this could be talked about in September info on bushfires
- Harold – Risk assessments. They wouldn't be able to leave the depot if they carried out a risk assessment
- Steve – emotional well being of staff. Our staff had a passion as emotionally involved. Do need to manage breaks and looked after properly
- Aileen – our staff go home and no one to debrief to, need to be conscious of this
- Val – thank you letter should be sent to all staff. Should go to all staff because the staff who were not involved at comms centre did back up those out on the field



## **POSITIVE ISSUES**

- Steve – no complaint about Council staff
- Glennis – everyone in their power wanted to do the right thing
- Cl R Sullivan – no loss of life. Road kept open to let people out (Timor Road)
- Phil – Comm centre – Council staff and procedure improved (T-card)
- Admin worked well, considering thrown in the deep end. Liz did well on Comm's radar.
- Operators shy on Shire radio. Staff had to filter what was important
- Steve – volunteers need structure
- Clr Coe – Council staff from top to bottom did an exceptional job

## **NEGATIVE ISSUES**

- Lack of communication
- Clr Coe – landholders frustrated by way S44 is declared
  1. Incident control taken out of hands of local land holders
  2. Night and early morning debrief – not the best time to debrief. Should be out with the fires
  3. Why are the outlying brigade resources taken away and brought to major fire?
- Steve – apparent value of grass to landholders. RFS watching pasture burn.
- Clr Capel –
  1. Age of fire fighters
  2. Teams from plains placed in mountainous country
- Clr Todd – Gilgandra brigades fighting at Hickeys Falls came to Coona for a debrief
- Clr Capel – Ambulance Service
- Phil – Triage was set up
- Clr Capel – how to did it work with our Disaster Plan?
- Steve – Disaster plan used but added to it

## **Points that were taken by Phil Southwell at this Council debrief are detailed below;**

1. 24/7 staff at Fire Control Centre
2. Information from Fire Control Centre to Operators – was slow
3. Purchase of fuel
4. Road closures
5. Width of fire breaks and operator safety
6. Clerical support – staff shortage / volunteer helpers / training
7. Council infrastructure – insurance
8. Notification to Councillors
9. People sleeping in cars
10. Evacuation contact numbers – so family members can contact/locate evacuees
11. Media control – management
12. Environmental Services involved with recovery. Asbestos is a concern
13. Those affected by the fire are slow in responding to survey
14. Operators working 12 hour shifts which is aligning with the RFS
15. Support to staff – isolated
16. Catering
17. RFS changeover leaves a gap in fire fighting

Meeting Closed – 11.33am

# WSC Outdoor Staff Debrief

Involved in the Wambelong Bushfire property protection from 12 January 2013

---

These notes formed the subject of discussion on the recently fought bushfires in the Warrumbungles. There were 55 outdoor staff in attendance and it is noted that there were at least 8 on leave that day. The meeting was facilitated by Harold Sutton, Manager Urban Services. Glennis Mangan, Learning and Development Coordinator did the scribing.

## Issues Raised:

Graders:

Unanimous discussion on concerns of the suitability of the council graders including;

Overheating

Tinted windows – no visibility at night

Lights are not adequate

Plastic fuel tanks

Steering systems (no actual steering wheel)

Not suitable to go in and cut tracks

Bull blades should be attached to all graders

## Communications:

Current and updated information not getting to the crews at the fire ground (No 1 Break)

People were not taking any notice of the road blocks

Cattle trucks were being held up while others were going through

Traffic control staff were not being told what they should do

Logs were not kept of who was on the roads

Timor Road traffic control were not local and did not know who the residents / land owners were.

Cards were needed for identification purposes

Media was barging through the road blocks

Road barriers should have been used to completely block the road

Lack of information left some crews waiting up to 4 hours at the fire ground not knowing what to do

For the safety of everyone when your shift is finished you must go home and rest

Crews were not being checked on throughout the shifts until the last night. This is a safety issue.

What is the backup is ALL communications are lost – there should be back repeaters.

## Staff rosters:

Crews were not changing over on time. Up to an hour would go by before the next crew arrived and by then the fire had moved on.

12 hour shifts did not consider the staff who had to travel to and from Coolah / Dunedoo etc. It is too much to expect them to travel home at the end of the 12 hour shift and be on deck again in the morning.

It has been suggested that consideration by giving to 3 x 9 hour shifts with half an hour between for staff to communicate with each other.

RFS would leave immediately their 12 hours shift finished – they did not wait for Shire staff.

Staff not rested after a 3 day stint.

## Vehicles:

Council's utilities not suitable for this kind of work – 4x4 wheel drives are needed,

An RFS troupe carrier remained unused at the council depot for the duration of the fire. This should have been deployed.

All vehicles should be fitted out with a fully equipped fire bag. This practice is used by the NSW Forestry and Council should follow suit.

## RFS:

Fire fighters should be local. Non locals do not know the area / roads and this becomes a safety issue.

RFS escort vehicles did not stay with the crews and their equipment – they would just leave them to their own devices.

Supplies for tasked crews were not brought checked on and refilled. ie bottled water.

RFS ran out of PPE and not all council staff had the proper gear.

**Safety:**

Crew leaders / crews are to make a call on not going into a dangerous situation.

Topographical maps were not needed but not supplied.

E-Purbs or some other tracking devices are needed.

Not all Council staff are training in Bushfire Safety accreditation.

These procedures were not being followed i.e identification cards were not collected.

A fire fighting unit should be with all plant / crews

What is expected of staff as far as risk assessments go within an emergency such as a bushfire.

The new nylon zippered boots are questionable as far as suitability goes.

A tracking system should be invested in so it is possible to know where all council fleet is at any time.

**General:**

Some staff very disappointed at not being given the opportunity to be involved in the property protection / fire fighting.

The mess hut was seen to be run really well and worked really well for the staff involved.

Logistics seemed to be much smoother and better run than the 1996 fires.

The airport was extremely well run and Mark Watton was congratulated on this.

# Rural Fire Service

## After Action Review - Coonabarabran / Gilgandra / Coonamble S44, January 2013

20 February 2013 ~ Coonabarabran Shire Hall

### Summary:

- Procedure for notification of the BFMC of a S44 declaration be clarified.
- Confusion regarding control of the fire between 11am and 2pm (when IC arrived).
- Landowners frustrated that the declaration wasn't communicated to them earlier – impractical to be communicated to everyone.
- Need more education regarding the importance on saving agricultural assets.
- Fire trails owned and managed by the BFMC have been closed – need to keep open and use gates and security cameras to stop pig hunters and only used if there is a fire. - Investigate Fire Trail access and security for the BFMC area of operation.
- Traffic getting past road blocks – problems for firefighters and Country Energy. Formal Traffic Control Protocols to be developed in conjunction with RTA and Local Council input.
- Local knowledge may need to have been bought in earlier. Early period was reactive – difficult to achieve time frames with resources available.
- Senior volunteers need to take on Div Com roles, OAA / Agency Commanders need local knowledge.
- Fatigue problem with locals.
- Not having local knowledge was an issue in some areas.
- EOC – did not work with RFS as limited resources, police facilities in FCC were inadequate, RFS need to incorporate provision of EOC facilities.
- Lack of communication issues - IMT – initial sourcing of adequate members was an issue due to size and speed of the incident. Difficulties with personnel rostering and tracking.
- RFS State Operations provided valuable early assistance however there were logistical problems handling the influx when they arrived – focus on improving early logistical response.
- Communication - Radio operators knew more that was happening than the IMT Operators. Fire Control facilities presented a challenge for communication. Education needed.
- FRNSW had limited fireground communications.
- All vehicles be installed with the appropriate communications radios suited to their roles.
- Education strategies developed to target uncontrolled back burning by local residence's during fire incidents.
- Approximate resources during peak response days (approx. 110 days)
  - 330 firefighting resources on the ground
  - 300+ firefighters
  - 50 plant operators
  - 40 aviation personnel
  - 27 IMT personnel
- Praise to catering staff and volunteers – Shire Hall and Basecamp.
- Media gaining unauthorised access to fireground – advising State Media.
- Problem with SMS message to residents – SMS had been used for the first time and is being assessed state wide.
- Statistics:
  - Fatalities 0
  - Injuries FF 28 (no critical injuries)
  - Civilian 1
  - Homes 53
  - Outbuildings 131
  - Pasture 33,060 ha (est)
  - Sheep 850 (est)
  - Cattle 320 (est)
  - Fences 1700 Kms (est)
  - Other 2.7m (est)
- Fence around Timor Dam water supply was ruined at cost of \$200,000
- 400+ statements regarding the fire collected to date (20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013)
- Draft plan received approval during the fires – effective document. Eg protection of Siding Spring Observatory shows how pre planning via the Risk & Ops plan can achieve results.

- Education played a part in saving lives.
- Aircrafts invaluable tool in protecting people, property and assets on the ground throughout response and containment.
- Recent adverse reports to media regarding the contribution of aviation to the firefighting effort are groundless and damaging to bush firefighting – the absence of fatalities despite significant other loss in very adverse conditions is a testament to the firefighters, the strategy used and the community's reaction under pressure.
- Mechanisms exist for funding of reasonable restoration in the response or clean up phase of a fire.
- Landowners request for rehabilitation after firefighting. Land managers to be encouraged to submit problems to Fire Control as soon as possible for assessment and formal approval.
- BFMC to ensure Operations Communication Plan is be up to date and updated when required. Fuel availability issues.
- DPI found it difficult to move fodder during the fire.
- To recognise local effort from the public – letter from the BFMC in local papers.



## **After Action Review - Coonabarabran / Gilgandra / Coonamble S44, January 2013**

20 February 2013 ~ Coonabarabran Shire Hall

### **Attendance:**

Supt Garry Wilson (RFS), John Whittall (DECCW, Area Manager), Milton Judd (Nature Conservation Council), David Sturtridge (RMS), Rod Young (NSW Farmers), GP Capt Peter Miller (RFS), Insp Stephen O'Callaghan (RFS, Community Safety), Insp Scott Tanner (NSW Police, LEOCON), Phil Southwell (Warrumbungle SC), Supt Stephen Hirst (FRNSW), Supt Allyn Purkiss (RFS, IC), Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons (RFS), Mayor Peter Shinton (Warrumbungle SC, Chair), Chief Supt Brett Condie (RFS, Mgr Region North), Steve Loane (Warrumbungle SC, LEMO), Supt Darren Vatcher (RFS), Jodie Storer (minutes).

### **Observers:**

D Luxford (RFS), Insp M Brougham (RFS), Supt Anthony Place (RFS), Supt Greg Lewis, Insp Jeremy Fewtrell, Chief Supt Steve Yorke (RFS), Supt Peter McKechnie (RFS), Sebastien Lahate (RFS), Marian Vakyn (RFS), GP Capt John Unwin (RFS), Supt John Cook (RFS), Michael Webb (NWZ BFMC), Capt Phil Mangan (FRNSW), Insp Grant O'Regan (FRNSW), Peter Church (RFS), GP Capt Bob Fenwick (RFS), Steve Bradshaw (NSW Govt), DGP Capt Wayne Clarke (RFS), Warwick Knight (NSW Farmers), Mark Fosdick (DECCW), Brett Pengilley (DECCW), Robert Smith (DECCW).

**P Shinton commenced proceedings 1039 hours.**

### **Apologies**

DGP Capt Michael Bowman (RFS), DGP Capt Graham Bunyan, Supt Martin Fileman (NSW Police), Rick Warren. Supt Stuart Watts (RFS), Stephen Campbell (Forestry NSW), Insp Anthony Smith (NSW Police), John Nolan (Crown Lands), Conan Rossler (Forestry NSW). (P Miller / D Vatcher).  
Accepted.

P Shinton - handed control of review to Chief Supt Brett Condie.

B Condie – summarised purpose and procedure of review.

***[Note: the sequence in which items have been documented may have been changed to improve communication of issues raised; an item may have been moved to group or contextualise the item.]***

### **1. Overview - Incident Controller - Supt. Allyn Purkiss.**

As per attached report.

### **2. First response**

1. First response - no issues reported.
2. Notification of other fire fighting agencies / landowners / managers - no issues reported.
3. Operations Coordination Plan - no issues reported.

### **3. Declaration / revocation / transfer of management**

1. B Condie - high level of alert across the State at this time; believed declaration occurred relatively early.
2. J Whittall – requested the procedure for notification of the BFMC of a S44 declaration be clarified.  
G Wilson - this occurred via RFS phone consultation with relevant agencies.  
B Condie – confirmed this is usual procedure followed by immediate contact with RFS State Operations to organise declaration and appointment of an Incident Controller.
3. J Whittall – believed there was confusion regarding control of the fire between the declaration (approx 11am) and the arrival of the IC (approx 2pm).  
B Condie – confirmed with review that DICs were in place in this intervening period.
4. See also 5.1
5. G Wilson - revocation may have been too early given the post-fire demands on local staff.  
B Condie - this was an issue outside the bounds of S44 legislation and should be addressed by support to the District after the incident.

### **4. Appointment of IC**

1. Supt Allyn Purkiss appointed - no issues reported.

### **5. Organisations / agencies**

1. S Loane advised major findings from Warrumbungle Council AAR
  - Generally a superb job done by most agencies.
  - Landowners were frustrated that the declaration was not communicated to them earlier and that incident control / strategy was taken out of their hands – particular reference to protection of agricultural assets.

S Fitzsimmons

- It is impractical for the declaration of a S44 to be communicated to everyone including all landholders in the first instance.
- Suggested comments regarding protection of pastoral assets were valid but they need to be examined in terms of the intensity of the situation and the primary goals of protecting life and homes.

Milton Judd / S O'Callaghan - support the need for more education regarding the importance of saving agricultural assets when safe to do so. *(Both gave examples of valid instances where fires could have been extinguished during later non critical periods and were not).*

### **6. Fireground access for fire fighters**

1. R Young
  - Has been made aware that fire trails have been permanently closed off in 'the park' to stopping hunters.
  - Suggests BFMC needs ensure RFS brigades and NPWS work to keep trails open and maintained on private land and National Park with Captains of the brigades needing to be consulted as to where they want trails.
  - Trails need gates instead of blockages and brigades need access to gates.

J Whittall advised that no trails were closed in the Warrumbungle Park.

G Wilson - this has been a focus of the BFMC - brigades were approached to submit trails over three years ago.

S Fitzsimmons

- Members of BFMC have ownership of trails and access to funding for them for some time.
- Reminder that trails are a primary source of fire so there may be a need for security via gates and blockages at times.
- Often problems with trails are not rectified due to them not being raised at BFMC level in the first place.

D Vatcher – Suggested trails may be listed as “Dormant” and therefore they are registered on the FTR and can be prepared for use, but are not required to meet any standard. This classification provides access to funding to upgrade trails and operational knowledge through the FTR if the trail needs to be upgraded during and operation.

B Condie - processes exist within the BFMC for these issues to be addressed suggested this be raised at next BFMC meeting.

## **7. Public access – road closures and other access restrictions.**

1. P Miller - there was insufficient enforcement of road blocks with traffic frequently getting past unmanned blocks. Created problems for firefighting and also Country Energy’s attempts to restore power. A lack of attention to restricting side roads contributed to the problem.

S Loane - agreed traffic management was an issue – Council staff were compromised due to people pushing past barricades.

Agreement that there is a need for more formal traffic control protocols to be developed.

## **8. Strategies – discuss effectiveness / deficiencies**

1. A Purkiss - local knowledge may need to have been brought in earlier.

G Wilson - the early period was very reactive and this was difficult to achieve in the timeframes with resources available.

S Fitzsimmons – there is a need for a more systematic inclusion of Group Officers in the IMT.

2. *Discussion where following points were raised as potential issues:*

1. some senior volunteers need to step up and prepare themselves to take on Div Com roles
2. a greater Group Officer presence is needed in the IMT – in particular a liaison role direct to field operations (brigades) to resolve local knowledge issues when they arise
3. Fatigue became a problem with locals
4. OOA/ Agency Commanders need local knowledge travelling with them
5. Other agencies Divisional Commanders operate from an RFS vehicle to ensure effective communication/ command/ safety and accountability of all crews
6. Increase IMT resourcing for plant coordination once resources reaches a certain level
7. Enforce use tabards to identify commanders on the fireground to improve communication

## **9. EOC**

1. P Southwell advised major points LEOCON wished communicated:

- EOC did not work when it was in the same room with RFS as it was too crowded and there were insufficient resources
- Vital communications and effectiveness were lost with IMT when it moved to the VRA building and effectiveness resumed when it was moved back into the tent next to Fire Control.
- Police facilities in FCC were inadequate - phone, radio and internet access were limited or nonexistent - believed this to be the case for most agency LOs.
- EOC access to ICON system was effective.
- Their LOs were not always present when required because of the disconnect from the IMT. The value of combining the EOC was more effective when co-located.

*M Judd, S Loane, D Sturtridge, S O’Callaghan - gave evidence to support LEOCON issues.*

S Hirst - EOC needed to be considered in terms of all agencies, not just bushfire and RFS location.

B Condie - the location of the EOC was being at MIC level throughout the incident. Confirmed need for further consideration regarding its location and functioning.

S Fitzsimmons:

- Acknowledged validity of comments.
- The current facility has improved significantly since the 1997 fires.
- RFS facilities are improving and incorporating the provision of EOC facilities – agreed that improving the local facility needs to be investigated; however plans will need to conform to budgeting limitations.
- Suggested the BFMC should also be looking at developing contingencies around more temporary provision of essential facilities rather than focusing on fixed infrastructure.

## 10. IMT

1. B Condie / A Purkiss

- Initial sourcing of adequate members was an issue due to the size and speed of progression of the incident.
- RFS State Operations provided valuable early assistance however there were logistical problems handling the influx when they arrived. Need to focus on improving early logistical response.

2. J Whittall - difficulties with personnel rostering and tracking; questioned the need for a single resource tracking device – possibly IRIS.

S Fitzsimmons – resource tracking is a universal problem and this software has been considered by other States/ Agencies and has been found to be not particularly effective.

P Miller - T Cards are not effective and put lives at risk – detailed some issues.

P Southwell - (due to structure of FCC facility) radio operators knew more about what was happening than the IMT Operations.

S Fitzsimmons

- Stressed the need for attention to Command and Control principles for effective communication
- T Cards are effective if used under these principles - IMTs should not be tracking the activities of individual units.
- Acknowledged that the Fire Control facilities presented a challenge for communications. Suggested need to target education in this area.

## 11. Fireground coordination

1. S Hirst - FRNSW had limited fireground communications. Questioned Ops Comms Plan and if GRN liaison channels were being used.

*Discussion regarding radio networks and protocols.*

S Fitzsimmons

- PMR/GRN radios now being used by emergency services are versatile and communications are possible - NPWS and Forests may need these radios supplied
- The problem lies in knowledge of the radios and Ops Comms Plan protocols.
- “CB” UHF is not controlled and cannot be a primary radio network for legal reasons – however is a valuable accessory
- BFMC need to ensure
  - all vehicles have radios suited to their roles
  - the Ops Comms Plan is up to date
  - all agencies are educated with regards to the Ops Comms Plan

2. J Whittall

- Uncontrolled backburning by local residents was an issue – requires education.
- First Sunday – an instance where an RFS vehicle could not be contacted when they needed to get to safety. Need reinforcement of safety protocols.
- Problem communicating with fixed wing aircraft at times for re-tasking - possibly related to the number of aircraft. Requested some attention be given to reinforcement of comms protocol for aircraft.



### 3. G Wilson

- Regarding some complaints from brigades regarding not being listened to on the fireground:
  - There were some instances where individuals were not even in PPE and so this is to be expected.
  - Requests from brigades for staging areas to be set up in Southern Wambelong area were not practical due to lack of local and specialist personnel to set up and coordinate in a timely manner.
  - Will review with brigade AARs to establish better mechanisms

## 12. Resources – A Purkiss

### 1. Approximate resources during peak response days (approx 10 days):

- 330 firefighting resources on the ground.
- 300+ firefighters
- 50 plant operators
- 40 aviation personnel
- 27 IMT personnel.

### S Fitzsimmons

- need to consider that many agencies still under-report resources and activities so stats can be deceptive. This issue is being raised at higher levels.
- Confirmed with B Condie that resourcing was not an issue throughout the incident – all identified needs were met.

### 2. W Knight (observer allowed to comment by Chair) – in his opinion, there were a large amount of wasted resources due to local brigades not being requested to take on a supervisory role on the fireground.

### S Fitzsimmons

- discussed the need for adherence to Command and Control protocols during any fire - where properly identified, qualified and briefed commanders are in place on the fire ground, brigade officers should be able to work with them to achieve the best outcomes.
- Brigade and group officers need to step up, be proactive - identify areas of need during an incident and find personnel to fill the need.

A Purkiss – confirmed there was a local knowledge deficit in the southern Wambelong divisions in the early days of the fire and this should have been addressed earlier.

### 3. S Loane - Council was able to provide a generator to allow Bugaldie to pump water when the power was down in that area.

## 13. Catering & accommodation

1. Agreement that catering was very good both at the Shire Hall and the basecamp. Praise for the efforts of the catering staff and catering volunteers.
2. G Wilson – there were initial catering problems for crews in southern Wambelong fire. Reports that locals were prevented from catering due to the need for food handling regulations. Eventually rectified.

D Vatcher – there is a need for increased logistical personnel in the initial stages of a rapidly escalating fire to ensure rapid support to meet span of control as resources increase. In potentially serious situations/ conditions there needs to be increased deployment of Logistics personnel to meet the needs of the operation. This also has safety and cost effective benefits due to efficiency of early support.

B Condie - this issue has been identified and is being addressed at a Regional level to get some uniformity of practice.

#### 14. Media and public awareness

1. G Wilson – were a few reports of media gaining unauthorised access to the fireground – including more serious reports of dangerous driving and obstructive behaviour.  
P Miller – confirmed with examples.  
S Fitzsimmons
  - Will advise State Media of these incidents.
  - Media situation is improving greatly due to State system of media education and accreditation. Authorised media should have dated photo ID and PPE, otherwise no entry.
  - Was happy with the media performance and assistance in general during the incident.
2. S Loane – public meetings were excellent except for a single comment about the retardant being toxic. Had to deal with considerable public concern for 10 days. Need to be careful of potential inflammatory comments.  
S Fitzsimmons – valid comment. Advised there will be a focus on education for IMTs and EOCs regarding the retardant in question.
3. *P Shinton left debrief 1231 hrs.*
4. M Webb (observer) – was a problem with a telephone SMS message that effectively instructed some residents to evacuate toward the fire.  
S Fitzsimmons
  - Discussed functioning of messaging system, including non-specificity problem. Agreed that the first text message sent was problematic in that it was worded for a specific area being impacted upon. Messages from this point forward were more detailed.
  - Requested consideration of the fact that SMS is being used for the first time this season and is being assessed state wide for its effectiveness.
  - Bushfire CRC is currently interviewing community members regarding their exposure to communications media during the incident.
  - Discussed other communication resources coming into play to satisfy increasing public demand for information.

#### 15. Management systems

1. J Whittall / S O'Callaghan – problems continue for external agencies accessing vital systems with non RFS hardware - the guest access to the RFS network was problematic in most cases and most NPWS computers could not be used for some unsolved IT reason.
2. J Whittall - Non RFS IMT personnel need more regular use of RFS systems.
3. S O'Callaghan – Zone did not have a powerful enough computer to operate MapDesk to the level required and had to have one shipped from Sydney. Believes there should be one of these units in every fire control centre.
4. D Vatcher – need for better document control practices
  - reports of problems with IAPs not being disseminated adequately
  - ad hoc supply and collection of documents after the incident
  - need for a document controller role particularly when the incident will be subject to a coronial.

P Miller – IAP dissemination was also hindered by poor coordination and timing of briefings with Div Comms

5. S O'Callaghan – need generic “team” emails set up immediately on declaration eg. Logistics, Operations etc
  - would prevent data being lost in the mailboxes of individuals
  - too difficult to coordinate a team when data is spread across multiple emails

S Fitzsimmons – agreed, advising this would also have the positive effect of reducing data traffic. Advised ICON performed very well, coping with 1000 concurrent users at times.

## 16. Outcomes:

### 1. Statistics

Fatalities	0
Injuries FF	28 (no critical injuries)
Civilian	1
Homes	53
Outbuildings	131
Pasture	33,060 ha (est)
Sheep	850 (est)
Cattle	320 (est)
Fences	1700 kms (est)
Other	2.7m (est)

2. S Loane - fence around Timor dam water supply was ruined at cost of \$200,000.

## 17. Cause of fire and investigations.

1. B Condie – given the incident is a police matter, discussion regarding the cause of the fire will be excluded from the review. Advised anyone wishing to make comment should take their information directly to the police.  
S Tanner – concurred. Have been 400+ statements collected to date. Arson squad will be in town for at least a further two weeks.
2. S Loane – Council has been receiving many enquiries and there is much innuendo circulating and also individuals claiming to speak with authority - enquired if there be a statement issued by anyone to reduce some of this activity?  
S Tanner – arson squad has been made aware of the situation and will be taking appropriate action.

## 18. Preparedness – Operations plan and pre-season checklist

1. No issues reported.

## 19. Relationship to bush fire risk management plan strategies

1. S O’Callaghan - draft plan received approval during fires. Believes it to be an effective document.  
S Fitzsimmons - referred to the protection of Siding Spring Observatory as an example of how pre-planning via the Risk & Ops plan can achieve results.

*Discussion where the following central points were agreed upon:*

- Education played a part in saving lives and property
  - Aircraft was an invaluable tool in protecting people, property and assets on the ground throughout response and containment
  - Recent adverse reports to media regarding the contribution of aviation to the firefighting effort are groundless and damaging to bush firefighting - the absence of fatalities despite significant other loss in very adverse conditions is a testament to the firefighters, the strategy used and the community’s reaction under pressure
2. S Loane – in light of asbestos costing the recovery process approx \$2m, requested support from the Commissioner regarding approaching Treasury for funding for staff on the ground to ensure landowners maintain DA bushfire requirements for existing dwellings.

S Fitzsimmons

- Will take the asbestos cleanup cost estimation back to counterpart in MPES.
- Requested Recovery Controller S Bradshaw to also assist Council with information.
- Ongoing DA compliance is a valid concern but a complex problem. Advised willingness to discuss further with S Loane regarding possible way forward.

## 20. Infrastructure – trails, APZs etc

1. S O'Callaghan – intend to focus BFMC on certain trails that have been created to get them recognised and funded.
2. P Southwell – advised difficulty in getting grants spent in the 6 months after allocation – not always practical and then funding is lost.

S Fitzsimmons

- valid comment
  - current system is in place to allow funds that are not going to be spent to be redirected and spent prior to 30 June.
  - elections and delayed budgets impact on timing of grant announcements however there has recently been some facility to gain approval to commence approved works from July 1.
  - RFS recently moving toward directing money back into Council allocation instead of the grant system
  - More money is being spent on trails than at any other time; however works must be ready to go.
3. P Miller – is there funding for removal of timber in table drains and sides of trails.

S Fitzsimmons

- Mechanisms exist for funding of reasonable restoration in the response or cleanup phase of a fire.
  - Routine maintenance can be directed via the local BFMC - landowners must attend to fair and reasonable maintenance. Finds that it is often the case that they have not been formally asked to attend to problems.
4. S O'Callaghan – receiving requests from landowners for rehabilitation after firefighting activity. Believes the message needed to get out earlier so these works could be attended to while resources were available.

S Fitzsimmons – mechanism to address still currently available; land managers need to raise problems with Fire Control as soon as possible for assessment and formal approval.

## 21. Other issues

1. S Loane – Council had to vouch for fuel for four days after the declaration before an adequate fuel supply was organised.  
S Fitzsimmons / B Condie – needs to be addressed in Ops Plan
2. S Loane – request it be considered that Council staff be paid for normal hours worked as well as OT due to the significant cost.
3. S Loane – entrance to Control Room from tea room only was a WHS issue – difficult to pass freely.
4. S Loane – is there the possibility of feedback into BCA review process as a result of this fire (to address such things as councillors having ability to over-ride DA bushfire protection requirements)

S Fitzsimmons

- NSW RFS is an active contributor to the BCA standard reviews and welcomes submission of any comment or issue for consideration.
- Understands local problem with non-adherence to DA standards; believes improvement is likely as NSW standards and protocols are ahead of other states and there is currently review of Planning for Bushfire Protection to incorporate latest research.

5. M Judd – ongoing concern of local BFMC that strict REF requirements mean riparian areas through its towns are becoming hazardous.  
S Fitzsimmons
  - must be put through BFMC; however if there is a fire hazard, action can be taken.
  - requested the problem be directed to his office if unresolved.
  - agreed to discuss further with P Southwell after the review
6. B Fenwick – found DPI had difficulty moving fodder during the fire; needs addressing.  
B Condie - raise issue at BFMC level.
7. J Whittall – would like to recognise local effort of public – suggested a letter from the BFMC.  
*General agreement to submit an open letter to the newspapers.*
8. S Fitzsimmons – thanked everyone for their efforts. Advised S44 period was a difficult time across the State and believed the Zone performed well.
9. S Loane – thanked all agencies for their efforts during the fire on behalf of WSC.  
*B Condie closed review 1400 hrs.*

## **22. Suggestions and recommendations:**

1. NPWS and RFS with Local Brigades to work on Fire Trail identification and status for submission to the BFMC for registration on the Fire Trail Register.
2. Investigate Fire Trail access and security for the BFMC area of operation.
3. Formal Traffic Control Protocols to be developed in conjunction with RTA and Local Council input.
4. Systematic inclusion of Group Officers into Incident Management Team for assistance with local knowledge.
5. Local Knowledge assistance insertion into out of area resources/teams
6. Investigate all agencies divisional commanders operate from RFS vehicles to ensure effective communication/command and safety.
7. Increased IMT resourcing for plant coordination scaling up with plant recourse levels as required.
8. Educate and enforce use of tabards for identification of field commanders.
9. Further consideration of Emergency Operations Centre location and functionality.
10. Investigate contingencies for temporarily provisions of essential facilities against fixed infrastructure.
11. Education strategies developed to target uncontrolled back burning by local residence's during fire incidents.
12. All vehicles be installed with the appropriate communications radios suited to their roles.
13. BFMC to ensure Operations Communication Plan is be up to date and updated when required
14. All agencies educated and become familiar with the Operations Communication Plan.
15. Identification of logistic personnel for the initial stages of a rapidly escalating fire until OOA assistance can be inserted into the IMT.

16. Follow up education for IMTs and EOCs regarding retardant usage at fires.
17. ICT issues required to be addressed for the use of RFS network access and systems external RFS Agencies address RFS systems capabilities on their computer equipment.
18. Generic Incident Management functional area emails set up immediately on declaration access to emails easily gained by authorised users.
19. Appropriate ICT infrastructure to cope with load and systems for the use of Map Desk and the like be investigated for Fire Control Centres / EOC / MIC's.
20. Identification of a Document Controller / Management Support Officer for insertion into IMT in the initial stages.
21. Recommendations/Suggestions be submitted for the Development Application process.
22. Concerns regarding strict REF process be addressed at the BFMC level.
23. Hazardous riparian areas be Identified at BFMC and addressed through the Hazard Complaints process.
24. Rehabilitation mechanisms still available for landowners, land managers to be encouraged to submit problems to Fire Control as soon as possible for assessment and formal approval.
25. Fuel availability and locations to be addressed in Section 52 plan of operations.
26. Moving of Fodder and other requirements to be addressed at the BFMC.



## ANU Lessons Learnt Workshop

### Siding Spring Observatory (SSO)

### Bushfire, January 2013

#### Summary:

The workshop aimed to identify the lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement related to:

1. Preparation of the SSO site: for both the fire season in general and for the January fires specifically (including the use of fire retardant paint, works to protect telescopes on site and the installation of grills on most building openings as well as ground keeping works e.g. clearing of large quantities of debris from around site building and clearing of trees.
  - a. ANU had made a decision at a meeting held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January that if the NSW RFS raised the bush fire danger level to Catastrophic, the SSO site would be closed for the duration of the 'Catastrophic' danger rating. Due to the speed the fire conditions changed, the danger level was never raised to Catastrophic and this measure was therefore never implemented. Even at Severe and Extreme fire danger levels, the RFS definitions clearly state that there is a risk to life in the event of a fire occurring.
  - b. In the days leading up to the fire, the NSW NPWS has closed the park to campers in response to the severe fire danger level. This did not prevent public access to the SSO site.
  - c. Even prior to the fire breaking its containment lines and approaching the SSO, the NSW RFS had declared a section 44 (a local 'State of Emergency') around the fire region.
2. Management of the site whilst under direct threat from the fire (including evacuation of the SSO).
  - a. The SSO site was successfully evacuated with no loss of life or injuries and that there was minimal damage to assets at site.
  - b. A large proportion of the damage at the SSO was due to embers entering or being trapped under outbuilding doors e.g. store rooms, leading to fires in the store rooms, or in damage to the door and door jamb assembly.
  - c. Whilst accepting the fact that the January fire was very fast moving and that it surprised a number of very experienced personnel with its speed and ferocity, it still highlights the importance of early evacuation of the SSO site. This is particularly important given the restricted access to the mountain (inc Timor Road and the Observatory road).
3. Recovery of the site once it was no longer under immediate threat from the fire.
  - a. Following the evacuation of the SSO site, an evacuation centre was set up in Coonabarabran (at the Acacia Hotel).
  - b. During the fire, live video images of the fire's impact on the site were maintained by re-tasking a number of astronomers' webcams.
  - c. The NSW RFS has been requesting a dedicated video surveillance system at the SSO site for assistance in remote fire spotting at SSO and in the surrounding regions.
  - d. Media issues - they were pressuring local residents and using deception to attempt to bypass road blocks and gather information. The media coverage also resulted in some local residents being exposed to footage / information regarding the destruction of their homes / properties / possessions, which they had not yet been informed of by the emergency services.
  - e. Issues with removal of Asbestos with the community with the removal trucks and using the road during school time.
  - f. The rebuilding process presents an opportunity for improvement of the facilities.
  - g. No formal SSO spokesperson or presence at the community meetings following the fire.

## Executive Summary

This report identifies the lessons learnt and recommendations resulting from the workshop conducted by ANU at Coonabarabran on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

The workshop was held to provide stakeholders of the ANU's Siding Spring Observatory (SSO) site with a forum to discuss the lessons learnt from the fire and resulting evacuation of the SSO that occurred on and around January 13, 2013.

Over 30 stakeholders participated in the workshop, including representatives from the SSO site owners; the Australian National University (ANU), their tenants; ANU's Research School of Astronomy & Astrophysics (RSAA) and the Australian Astronomical Observatory (AAO), and external stakeholders; the Warrumbungle Shire Council, NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The workshop aimed to identify the lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement related to:

1. preparation of the SSO site: for both the fire season in general and for the January fires specifically
2. management of the site whilst under direct threat from the fire (including evacuation of the SSO)
3. recovery of the site once it was no longer under immediate threat from the fire.

The key findings from the workshop were:

- The current program of bush fire preparation needs to be formalised and structured to manage the areas of highest risk on site, including the access road (see Recommendation 1).
- There needs to be better awareness of the role and structure of the SSO Emergency Control Organisation (ECO) at site (see Recommendation 3), including how it is enacted during an emergency and the role and responsibilities of the SSO community.
- The evacuation decision-making process needs to be reviewed and formalised to provide structured guidance to those responsible for making the decision (see Recommendation 6).
- The security of the SSO site needs to be reviewed, with particular attention paid to methods of controlling public access to the SSO (including the ANU campus and the access road) during an emergency (see Recommendation 13).



## Participants

Name	Position / Organisation
Robyn Barrington	Administration Officer, ANU SSO
Mark Pritchard	Fire Safety Officer, ANU
Brent Amundson	Security Manager, ANU
Sharyn McGerty	HR Manager, ANU
Scott Coleman	SSO Site Manager, ANU
Robert Patterson	AAO
John Goodyear	Technician, AAO
Wayne Clarke	AAO
Robert Dean	Telescope Systems Manager, AAO
Barry Owens	Engineering and Technical Services, ANU
Phil Southwell	Emergency Services Coordinator – Warrumbungle Shire Council
Steven Tucker	A/Area Manager, NPWS
Mick Serena	Director Facilities and Services (F&S), ANU
Tim Borough	Project Coordinator F&S, ANU
Wayne Ford	Associate Director F&S, ANU
Matt Smith	Associate Director F&S, ANU
Mike Fowler	RSAA
Martin Oestreich	AAO
Fred Watson	AAO
Peter Poulos	iTelescope.net
Phil Mangan	FR NSW Captain
Kristin Fiegert	Technical Officer, AAO
Doug Gray	Operations Manager, AAO
Peter Verwayen	Senior Operations Officer, RSAA
Ian Adams	Technical, ANU RSAA
Donna Burton	Technical, ANU RSAA
Kiri Robbie	Administration Coordinator, RSAA
Neville Legg	General Manager, AAO
Darren Stafford	Technical Officer, AAO
Steven Lee	Head of Night Assisting, AAO
Stuart Green	Manager, NSW Rural Fire Services
Steve Loane	General Manager, Warrumbungle Shire

## Observations

### **Preparedness (pre bush fire season)**

- As a result of the lessons learnt from the 2003 fires affecting ANU's Mt Stromlo site, a large program of fire 'hardening' works designed to protect buildings and the site itself were undertaken at the SSO. These works included measures such as the use of fire retardant paint, works to protect telescopes on site and the installation of grills on most building openings against ember attack (with the exception of some outbuildings). This program was considered to have played a large part in protecting these buildings on site.
- It was generally accepted by the workshop participants that the fuel load reduction works conducted around site were excellent, but that the intensity of the fires and the location of the site were such that no level of preparation could have prevented the fire from impacting the site.
- Ground keeping works were conducted to reduce the fire load on site in preparation for the fire season, including clearing of large quantities of debris from around site buildings.
- Substantial tree clearing efforts were undertaken in the lead up to the fire season (approx. 2,500 trees). These efforts were undertaken in consultation with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and focussed on creating fire breaks, reducing the density of trees along the site boundaries and on targeting tree species that are prone to exacerbating ember attack during bush fires. **See Recommendation 1**
- There is a single access road leading onto the SSO site and trees flank the edge of the road along a large proportion of its length. ANU only own a small section of this road, with the local shire retaining ownership of the large majority. Currently there is no suitable alternate route of access / egress. In the event of a fire, burning and fallen trees present a significant risk to people using the road, including evacuees from the site and RFS crews. The condition of this road has a direct bearing on the safety of people on the mountain and on the early evacuation of the SSO if threatened by a fire. **See Recommendation 1.a**
- A bush fire risk assessment was conducted at the site in May 2012.
- A site fire refuge point was identified at the AAT dome. Although it was not utilised during the January fires, its suitability was clearly demonstrated during the fire when temperatures in excess of 100°C were recorded outside the refuge point, complemented by a temperature of just 20°C inside.

In previous years a dedicated fire team was present at the SSO, providing a clear focal point for emergency preparedness and response at site. This team had fire-trained personnel on duty on the weekends and also provided a level of security (monitoring visitors and fire fields around the mountain) as well as providing training and a point of contact for ECO / fire related issues. This fire team has since been disbanded and control of the fire appliance and equipment handed over to the local RFS. Workshop participants clearly felt that this fire team provided a safety presence and profile at the SSO that is not matched by the ECO arrangements in their current format. **See**

### **Recommendations 2 and 3**

- Site-wide fire drills (incorporating practice evacuations) have not been conducted recently at the SSO. **See Recommendation 3.e**
- There is currently no site-wide formal induction process onto the SSO campus that covers the ECO structure, process and expectations. Annual Emergency Control Organisation training takes place on the site but no program of evacuation drills is in place to re-enforce this information. **See Recommendation 3**
- First aid awareness and preparedness does not enjoy a very high profile amongst the SSO community. There is not a widespread knowledge of the facilities and expertise available. An OHS working group is currently being set up by ANU for the SSO site which will address this issue as a part of its scope. **See Recommendation 4**
- There is a clear area at the SSO sufficient for landing a helicopter, but it has not been certified as a Helipad by the relevant aviation authorities. This presents a potential method of secondary access to the SSO site in case the primary method (i.e. the access road) is compromised, as well as a medivac staging point for first aid emergencies.
- **See Recommendation 5**

### ***Preparedness (specific to January fire risk)***

- In response to the recognised fire risk to the SSO site, a meeting was held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013 to discuss the strategy for evacuation of the SSO. At this meeting scenarios for both an orderly evacuation and for sheltering in place were discussed.
- Leading up to the fire impacting the SSO, the site community were briefed on the risks presented by the fire in preparation for potential evacuation.
- ANU had made the decision that if the NSW RFS raised the bush fire danger level to Catastrophic, the SSO site would be closed for the duration of the 'Catastrophic' danger rating. Unfortunately due to the speed with which the fire conditions changed, the danger level was never raised to Catastrophic and this measure was therefore never implemented. It is worth noting that even at Severe and Extreme fire danger levels, the RFS definitions clearly state that there is a risk to life in the event of a fire occurring.
- In the days leading up to the fire, the NSW NPWS has closed the park to campers in response to the Severe fire danger level. This did not prevent public access to the SSO site.
- Even prior to the fire breaking its containment lines and approaching the SSO, the NSW RFS had declared a section 44 (a local 'State of Emergency') around the fire region.
- When determining the need to evacuate the mountain (and the evacuation time-frame), there are a number of considerations regarding the specific nature and location of the site and the requirements of the site community that need to be taken into account. Some specific considerations include the isolated location, the access restrictions (single access road), the site geography (mountainous, inaccessible) and the nature of the people and work being conducted on site (reluctance to leave work, time required to prepare for evacuation). **See Recommendation 6**
- Leading up to the emergency on Sunday, meetings were held on the site to brief people on the actions required if the site was to be evacuated. On the day of the fire, everybody at the SSO site was alerted to the fire danger through a program of door knocking. Briefings were also carried out at site communal areas covering preparation and the seriousness of the situation. **See Recommendation 7**

### ***Fire Impact***

- It is important to note that the SSO site was successfully evacuated with no loss of life or injuries and that there was minimal damage to assets at site. In light of the severity of the fire and the speed with which it engulfed the site this is a testament to the management of the emergency and the response of the SSO community.
- A large proportion of the damage sustained at the SSO was due to embers entering or being trapped under outbuilding doors (e.g. store rooms). This either led to fires in the store rooms, or in damage to the door and door jamb assembly. **See Recommendation 8**
- There were no gaps identified in communications between the ANU SSO Operations Manager and emergency services.
- Due to poor mobile communications on the mountain, emergency services were utilising land lines for some emergency communications. Some issues were experienced when attempting to call mobile numbers due to restrictions on a phone in the AAO tea room. **See Recommendation 9**
- During the fire, the NSW RFS found that some of the contact information provided to them (regarding stakeholders at SSO) was not current. **See Recommendation 10**
- Some issues were experienced around communication between the various stakeholders at SSO in the period leading up to the site being evacuated. This led to some tenants being unaware of the efforts being made by ANU to monitor the status of the fire. This included poor awareness of the process of hourly checks of the fire even prior to it breaking its original containment lines. **See Recommendation 3.b**
- Communications on the mountain are problematic due to poor (or no) reception for mobile phones and radios at various locations. This presented a problem regarding consistent communications with all personnel at SSO. **See Recommendation 9**
- There is a single alarm siren present at SSO. This alarm is utilised for general fire warnings, and may not command the attention amongst site personnel required for immediate action in the event of an evacuation (especially on short notice). **See Recommendation 11**
- Amongst workshop participants, there was a low level of awareness regarding Emergency Control Organisation at SSO (inc warden and communication arrangements). Detailed knowledge of the ECO arrangements appeared to be confined to a small number of people.

- During an emergency situation, ANU's senior representative has the authority to order evacuation of the SSO site based on their assessment of the situation. They are able to access and utilise information / advice from other members of the SSO community as appropriate to make this decision.
- There is uncertainty amongst the SSO community regarding the appropriate chain of command in effect during an emergency, including who had the authority to initiate an evacuation of the site and what consultation was required with the wider SSO community.  
**See Recommendation 3.a**
- Whilst accepting the fact that the January fire was very fast moving and that it surprised a number of very experienced personnel with its speed and ferocity, it still highlights the importance of early evacuation of the SSO site. This is particularly important given the restricted access to the mountain (inc Timor Road and the Observatory road).  
**See Recommendation 6.e**
- Due to the ANU only having direct authority over the SSO site at the top of the mountain, control of visitors at the site is a major concern during an emergency. In particular, the road leading up to the SSO is a public road and therefore ANU cannot prevent its use by members of the public. During an emergency, this may result in visitors arriving at the SSO or compromising the effective use of the access road. Photos taken during the final evacuation of the SSO show members of the public evacuating with the last SSO personnel. This issue also introduces complications around accounting for personnel on the mountain in the event of a site muster or evacuation.
- Public access to the SSO property is prohibited and contractors are required to fill in a log prior to entry onto the site. This is easy to bypass as there are no 'hard' barriers preventing access (only signage and policing by the SSO community). **See Recommendation 13.a**
- The SSO emergency response documentation contains a procedure for controlling access to the mountain by stationing personnel at the base of the access road (with radio contact to the SSO Site Manager). However, implementation and enforcement of this policy is difficult due to issues with resourcing, communication and authority.  
**See Recommendation 13.b**

### **Recovery**

- Following the evacuation of the SSO site, an evacuation centre was set up in Coonabarabran (at the Acacia Hotel). People were evacuated to this centre but not retained there – i.e. they were free to leave at their discretion. Subsequent evacuees were therefore unable to easily determine which of their colleagues had been successfully evacuated. A complete evacuation list was available within 20min of the command centre being setup **See Recommendation 12**
- ANU's emergency response for the SSO was conducted from the Acacia Hotel. Diary records of response actions were kept and the situation at the SSO was monitored via a video link to webcams at site. Information was relayed to emergency services via hourly briefings.
- Similarly, AAO activated their Business Continuity Plan from a response centre in Coonabarabran. They have identified and implemented a number of improvements to this plan as a result of the emergency.
- During the fire, live video images of the fire's impact on the site were maintained by re-tasking a number of astronomers' webcams. This process experienced a short period of unavailability due to a 'Denial of Service' situation where the system was overloaded when members of the public began to access the video feeds. Whilst this was controlled and the video feed regained, it placed emphasis on the fact that this system is not reliable enough for use during an emergency. Access to this footage allowed more informed decisions to be made regarding the damage being sustained at site and the subsequent recovery process.
- The NSW RFS has been requesting a dedicated video surveillance system at the SSO site for assistance in remote fire spotting at SSO and in the surrounding regions, but has not been able to secure funding for the project. **See Recommendation 13.c**
- Immediately following the evacuation of SSO, ANU provided additional personnel to relieve and support responders and emergency response managers.
- ANU and AAO have made counselling available to those of the SSO community impacted by the fire. This was initially available immediately following the fire and has been ongoing since as required.

- ANU personnel referred media requests for information back to the communications personnel at ANU. Likewise, other organisations represented at SSO utilised their own communications capabilities.
- There were no apparent issues uncovered regarding the presentation of a coordinated media front. The approach was consistent, but not necessarily as a result of a planned / coordinated approach between the Organisations.
- Various workshop participants highlighted the fact that they utilised the internet / social media (e.g. twitter / blogs) as their primary source of information to track developments at the SSO during the fire. Some information was available on the RFS website (although limited in detail specific to the SSO fire) and the ANU also replaced their standard web page with an information portal optimised for fast loading and updating.

**See Recommendation 14**

- There was a strong focus from the media on the fire, to the point where they were pressuring local residents and using deception to attempt to bypass road blocks and gather information. The media coverage also resulted in some local residents being exposed to footage / information regarding the destruction of their homes / properties / possessions, which they had not yet been informed of by the emergency services.
- Following the passing of a bush fire at the SSO site, early access to the site is imperative to prevent further damage from subsequent spot fires and flare-ups. Access was gained following the January fires using the access road, but progress was slow due to the need to clear a safe path through the trees. **See Recommendation 15**
- The engagement with and involvement of insurance companies in the recovery of the site has been carried out in an acceptable manner and time-frame, highlighting the importance of having good / sufficient coverage.
- There were some community relations issues around the recovery and disposal of asbestos at SSO following the fire. Asbestos removal at SSO was controlled (well beyond the EPA and NSW / ACT requirements) and an occupational hygienist was engaged to oversee the removal process – including checking each truck prior to it leaving the site. However, there was some concern over the removal trucks utilising the road during school times. The perception of danger amongst the community could have been managed better through a program of consultation, engagement and education. **See Recommendation 16**
- It was noted that the rebuilding process at the SSO presents an opportunity for improvement of the facilities, especially in regard to the ability of structures to survive a bush fire event. **See Recommendation 17**
- There was no formal SSO spokesperson or presence at the community meetings following the fire. Whilst there were representatives from the SSO community present, this was not in a formal capacity. **See Recommendation 18**
- The fire at SSO has been logged as an incident with ComCare and also in ANU's system as per ANU's internal requirements. **See Recommendation 19**

### **Implementation Plan – Summary of Recommendations**

**Note:** Acceptance of the recommendations below and the method of their implementation is at the sole discretion of ANU.

#	Recommendation	Accepted (yes / no)	Responsible	Anticipated Time frame (Due by)
1.	<p>Develop and implement a formal Bush Fire Management Plan for the SSO site to facilitate a considered, coordinated and targeted approach to bush fire risk reduction. The management plan should consider the areas of highest risk during a bush fire and identify a scheduled program of actions including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tree / vegetation clearing around the SSO site and access road (with a focus on bush fire safety / survivability) – in coordination with the Shire (as owners of part of Observatory Road).</li> <li>b. General ground keeping at site to minimise bush fire fuel load.</li> </ul>	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > E&TS (Fire)	Oct 2013
2.	<p>Review and finalise Emergency Plan and Emergency Response Procedures for the site, incorporating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Discussions between ANU and site stakeholders to the need for a fire team and possible other alternatives such as webcams around site to offset need for fire watch activity. Explore other training and learning opportunities that the SSO site could tap into such as RFS training.</li> <li>b. Identify the response structure, chain of command and levels of authority, including points of interaction and consultation between SSO tenants and with ANU.</li> <li>c. Identify the Emergency communications, including the mechanism for distribution of emergency information (inc current status / situational awareness) to key SSO stakeholders / tenants and on to their personnel.</li> <li>d. Specific training for designated ECO wardens / tenant representatives.</li> <li>e. The responsibilities of the general SSO community in the event of an emergency (inc the expected response actions).</li> <li>f. Exercises / drills to test and reinforce understanding of ECO requirements.</li> <li>g. Review of the Emergency Plan and Response Procedures by external party</li> </ul>	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > E&TS (Fire)	September 2013

3.	<p>Develop a package for induction and ongoing refresher training of SSO community members (including tenants and visiting astronomers) on the SSO Emergency Control Organisation. This package must cover:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response structure, chain of command and levels of authority, including points of interaction and consultation between SSO tenants and with ANU.</li> <li>Emergency communications, including the mechanism for distribution of emergency information (inc current status / situational awareness) to key SSO stakeholders / tenants and on to their personnel.</li> <li>Specific training for designated ECO wardens / tenant representatives.</li> <li>The responsibilities of the general SSO community in the event of an emergency (inc the expected response actions).</li> <li>Exercises / drills to test and reinforce understanding of ECO requirements.</li> </ol>	yes	<p>ANU &gt; Site WHS committee</p> <p>Tenants</p>	Dec 2013
4.	<p>Review first aid coverage and facilities at SSO. Carry out training to facilitate effective coverage of all shifts and locations at site.</p>	yes	<p>All ANU &gt; Facilities &amp; Services &gt; Site Operations Manager</p>	June 2013
5.	<p>Determine the need, practicability and costs of having a defined helicopter landing area at the SSO site (as a medivac point or method of secondary access).</p>	yes	<p>ANU &gt; Facilities &amp; Services &gt; E&amp;TS</p>	Nov 2013
6.	<p>Prepare a list of prompts that must be taken into consideration when planning a response strategy (including evacuation or sheltering-in-place). In compiling this list:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly identify the primary priority as the safety of personnel and the need for early decisions on evacuation.</li> <li>Consult with SSO stakeholders and get sign-off on agreed list.</li> <li>Identify set trigger points for specific emergency scenarios and the expected emergency response (including consideration of any response / actions being undertaken by the NSW NPWS and emergency services).</li> <li>Review the triggers for evacuation during the 2003 (Mt Stromlo) and 2013 (SSO) fires and determine any opportunities to prevent similar late stage / short notice evacuations in the future.</li> <li>Consult other organisations (with similarly isolated sites) regarding their evacuation protocols.</li> </ol>	yes	<p>ANU &gt; Facilities &amp; Services &gt; E&amp;TS (Fire) as part of the recommendation 2</p>	September 2013

7.	Investigate the erection of a fire danger display board on campus entry so that the SSO community are aware at all times of the current fire danger level and instigate a process to ensure this board is kept up to date.	yes	ANU Site Operations Manager / RFS	Aug 2013
8.	Future fire preparation should address the threat of embers causing damage through ingress into buildings (particularly outbuildings) under doors.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services Tenants	ongoing
9.	Remove blocks on calling mobile phones from landlines at SSO to allow their effective use for communications during emergencies. Investigate other possible options for communications at the site (i.e. SSO radio network).	yes	Tenants ANU lead	June 2013
10	Implement a process for regular scheduled reviews of emergency contact information for personnel at SSO and its distribution to key stakeholders.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > Site Operations Manager - lead All	Quarterly starting June 2013
11	Investigate a reliable method of communicating with all personnel at the SSO site in the event of an emergency situation – including use of an evacuation-specific siren tone audible everywhere on the mountain (including inside buildings).	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > E&TS	August 2013
12	Following any evacuation at / of SSO, maintain a clearly displayed log of those people accounted for reference by emergency responders and other evacuees.	yes	ANU > SSO > ECO	ongoing



13	<p>Security –</p> <p>a. Implement security controls to account for people arriving at the SSO and in particular those accessing the ANU operated area of the mountain. Measures to consider include video surveillance of the entry point onto site, a more rigorous site entry / sign-in procedure or a requirement for non-SSO personnel (e.g. contractors / visitors) to wear identification whilst on site.</p> <p>b. Conduct a security review of the site focussing on maintaining the safety of people (public and residents) and assets on site, including access control and management of the access road (authority for use and closure) during an emergency. This review should consider the requirements and processes for controlling access to the mountain and to the SSO site (inc collaboration with local council and / or police, use of a physical measures such as a boom gate).</p> <p>c. Investigate the need for, required scope and cost of a dedicated system of surveillance cameras at the SSO for remote monitoring of the site and its surroundings. Include restricted access to these cameras to appropriate organisations / personnel (e.g. ANU, emergency services, SSO tenants, local Shire).</p>	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services	September 2013
14	Develop a coordinated (between the ANU and all SSO tenants) media plan, strategy and message, to ensure a consistent approach to emergency related media communications by all SSO stakeholders. This plan must incorporate the effective use and updating of all available communications channels (e.g. organisational websites, social media, media releases).	yes	All ANU > Facilities & Services ANU > Strategic Communications and Public Affairs	December 2013
15	Investigate the options for early access to the SSO site following a bush fire. Consider options including having a fire crew shelter-in-place at the site and having a pre-organised capability to air-lift personnel into the site. Incorporate findings into the SSO emergency response plan.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > E&TS (Fire) as part of recommendation 2	September 2013
16	Identify any aspect of the recovery operations at SSO that may have an impact on the local community. Formulate and implement a process of community consultation, engagement and education as a part of these operations.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > Site Operations Manager	ongoing
17	Develop a master plan for the recovery of the SSO site, taking into consideration the optimal layout and design / construction methods for fire survivability of new buildings.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services	November 2013

18	Maintain a strong ongoing SSO presence at local community meetings during and subsequent to the SSO site recovery, in recognition of the importance of the SSO to the wider community.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > Site Operations Manager	ongoing
19	ANU to follow up on the status of the incident report into the SSO fire (with ComCare) and determine whether any further investigations are ongoing or planned.	yes	ANU > Facilities & Services > HR	May 2013

# Ministry of Police & Emergency Service

## Wambelong Fire Recovery Debrief

8<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Coonabarabran Council Chambers

### Summary:

- Increased recovery training for all parties involved and increase combat agency awareness of their role in recovery.
- Recovery operations require a Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) system.
- Council's need for resources on recovery responsibilities.
- Community anxiety – delay of communication.
- Fatigue of staff.
- Delay of asbestos information.
- Communication to entire community not just victims - develop a communication strategy.
- Emergency housing process.
- Insurance delays.
- Community involvement in meetings.
- Recovery Committee – members need to be senior people and need to have representation from community groups not just individuals.
- Emotional wellbeing of the community.
- Possibility of another season – consider implications. Financial impact of Council to be reviewed.
- Support of Volunteers.



### Recovery Coordinator Key Findings

- Increased recovery training for all parties involved in recovery.
- Increase combat agency awareness of their role in recovery.
- Analysis of National Parks and Wildlife bushfires regarding the current processes to enable decision making and informed discussion for future events.

### Training

- Development of combat agency and functional area roles in recovery.
- Recovery operations require a Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) system that can provide comprehensive and timely information to all agencies not just police. This could incorporate safety and housing information and incorporate data from a recovery centre.

### Resources and Capacity

- Council has an immediate need for resources as staff take on recovery responsibilities.
- Fatigue, especially amongst disaster affected staff that continue to attend work.
- The four day delay in establishing the recovery centre and delay for asbestos information greatly increased community anxiety.
- How do we lower community anxiety in the setup phase
- How do we increase local capacity?

## **Communication**

- Difficulty reaching all community members even when using extensive and multiple communication channels.
- The delays in accurate information suitable for public distribution greatly increased anxiety. Need to dispel myths, potentially thought faster communication.
- Need for a communication strategy and templates to guide council.
- Development of a state level combat agency calling card for property access. Need to engage the entire community not just the victims.

## **Private Rights**

- Clarification of ownership laws of land surrounding access and retrieval of property.

## **Emergency Housing**

- There is no process or guidelines for the coordination of housing donations and no support from the supporting agency.

## **Insurance Delays**

- Interaction with the agencies resulted in uncertainty and anxiety in community.
- Insurance actions where uncoordinated with the recovery process.

## **Community Engagement**

- How to get more people to community meetings, not just victims.
- Maintaining information updates to avoid a sense of abandonment.

## **Recovery Committee**

- The recovery committee and sub committees strengthened the existing human services interagency.
- Need for transparency in composition or members.
- Representation from community groups, not just individuals.
- Members need to be senior people with the authority to make decisions and allocate resources.

## **Psychosocial**

- Managing emotional wellbeing once emergency services leave and establishing services.
- Appropriate local resources to cope with latent second wave of emotional needs especially amongst primary producers as it can take many years for Post Trauma Stress Disorder to show.
- Importance of keeping people up to date and aware.

## **Agency Preparation**

- Need to be aware of the possibility of another season and consider implications.
- Preparation for next event through identification of vulnerable members of the community and have their information mapped.

## **NDRRA**

- The financial impact on Council needs to be reviewed.
- Clearer guidelines

## **Volunteers**

- Greater support for volunteers with some forced to take annual leave to assist the recovery effort.

# Minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Local Emergency Management Committee Meeting

18 November 2013 commencing at 7.00pm at the VRA Building at Coonabarabran

**Summary:**

- The Regional Operation Centre (ROC) was activated on Tuesday 10th January.
- The Section 44 was pre-empted Sunday morning (13/1/13) as the shire had a total of 7 fires all started from lightning strikes from the previous night.
- Aircraft were active from early Sunday morning, with activity around the NP and AAO at about 1300 – 1400 hours.
- The evacuation of residents was signalled at 1430 Hours.
- First call 15.38 hours - Activated for the evacuation of Timor Road. Together with Police a total of 4 vehicles started from Siding Springs turn off, evacuating towards town using two vehicles each side of the road. Houses that were unoccupied had a note left at the door.
- Fire was very close at times with close calls.
- The evacuation text message was received while VRA were still at the VRA shed. The Evacuation Phone / Text message only reached 60% of residents.
- Small number of fire related injuries, but no major accidents.
- Bugaldie took about 2 hours to evacuate - a total of 30 residents with 3 refusing to leave. Residents were directed to Baradine with SES shed temporary accommodation.
- The Baradine Hotel became the official Evacuation Centre with a total of 21 people. Most manpower resources were in the fire fighting effort.
- The Park was closed on Tuesday (8/1/13) after Catastrophic Fire Day and a decision by western NP managers maintained the closed status.
- It was to be reviewed on Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2013. This decision meant no evacuation of bush walkers was necessary on the 'Sunday' saving valuable manpower and resources.
- The committee agreed that the Bushfire Evacuation Plan should be revisited with the addition of Timor Road and Bugaldie Areas to the maps.



<b>CHAIRPERSON</b>	Kevin Tighe	LEMO
<b>PRESENT</b>	Stuart Davies	REMO Dubbo
	Tony Byrnes	REMO Tamworth
	Scott Tanner	LEOCON
	Stuart Green	RFS
	Phil Mangan	NSWF&R
	Clinton Baglee	NSWF&R
	Jeremy Fewtrell	NSWF&R Dubbo
	Bob Cosgrove	SES Baradine
	Tony Cole	VRA Coonabarabran
	Rodney Coombes	VRA Coonabarabran
	Mark Gibson	VRA Commissioner
	Rod Williams	VRA Coolah
	Tom Mumford	VRA Coolah
	Peter Vidler	VRA Mendooran
	Sonja Kramagner	NSW Ambulance
	Kasey Wilson	NSW Ambulance
	Mark Forsdick	NPWS
<b>MINUTES:</b>	Phil Southwell	WSC

<b>APOLOGIES</b>	Anthony Smith	NSW Police
	Martin Fileman	NSW Police
	Greg Lewis	NSW F&R
	Brad Size	NSW F&R
	Col Bennett	NSW F&R
	Ted Miller	VRA Coolah
	Barry Johnson	SES Baradine
	Graham Milgate	VRA Coordinator
	Sharon Lawence	NSW Ambulance

Introduction by Phil Southwell, Noted that this is not a fire fighting debrief, the focus for us, as the EOC is evacuations Please take this opportunity to plan for our next 'evacuation/ event ' and provide suggestions rather than criticism of other agencies.

**SPEAKERS**

**Stuart Davies REMO**

The Regional Operation Centre (ROC) was activated on Tuesday 10th January after discussion, the previous day with the Regional Manager of the RFS ROC made contact with all agencies and monitored all fires in the Central West.

The REMO had valuable access to the RFS 'Icon' system allowing a better understanding of all RFS operations.

With the EOC established on the 13/1/13 Tony Byrnes from Tamworth was deployed to start the Impact Assessment process.

**Stuart Green RFS**

The Section 44 was preempted Sunday morning (13/1/13) as the shire had a total of 7 fires all started from lightning strikes from the previous night.

Aircraft were active from early Sunday morning, with activity around the NP and AAO at about 1300 – 1400 hours. The evacuation of residents was signaled at 1430 Hours

**Phil Mangan NSW&R**

NSWF&R pumper was in attendance at AAO and Timor / Blackburn Road.

Communication with 'control' was nonexistent with UHF CB being used by Police and VRA Namio Street Coonabarabran was impacted by embers at 1800 Hours with numerous call.

**Antony Smith NSW Police ( notes read by Scott Tanner)**

The EOC at the RFS, FCC had no Police Radio that worked

The EOC at the RFS, FCC had no NSWF&R radio

The RFS FCC was very crowded

The EOC needs to be separated at the RFS FCC so that the LO has its own sound proof area.

When the EOC was relocated to the VRA building there was no RFS LO and information from the RFS was very thin creating a barrier for fire information.

**Rod Coombes VRA**

First call 15.38 Hours - Activated for the evacuation of Timor Road. Together with Police a total of 4 vehicles started from Siding Springs turn off , evacuating towards town using two vehicles each side of the road. Fire was very close at times with close calls

Communications was with RFS PMR radios to FCC and UHF CB to Police.

The VRA and Police worked well together and on occasions the Police were required to double back to the VRA location, to talk residents into evacuating.

Houses that were unoccupied had a note left at the door. The evacuation text message was received while VRA were still at the VRA shed. The Evacuation Phone / Text message only reached 60% of residents

Suggestion (Rod) – Next time that the Police / VRA should split up, having one VRA, One Police officer per vehicle, making the residents more responsive to been asked to leave.

**Scott Tanner LEOCON**

A Task Force has been set up to investigate all matters relating to the fire and report to the coroner

### **Kasey Wilson NSW Ambulance**

When speaking to superiors it was difficult relaying the scale of the fire and its location  
Small number of fire related injuries, but no major accidents  
Ambulance and Health LO's worked well together.

### **Bob Cosgrove SES Baradine**

Activated at 1513 Hours on Sunday with, assisting Police in evacuation of Goorianawa Road and also Bugaldie village. Bugaldie took about 2 hours to evacuate. A total of 30 residents with 3 refusing to leave.

Residents from Bugaldie were directed to Baradine with SES shed temporary accommodation. The Baradine Hotel became the official Evacuation Centre with a total of 21 people registered by midnight. Red Cross personnel were present Monday morning.

### **Kevin Tighe LEMO**

Activated after phone call Sunday after lunch. The Bowling Club was used as an Evacuation Centre as the school was closed (Holidays) and the club was a place that was air conditioned ( max temp 40 degrees plus ) so the Bowling Club was preferred.

The Youth Centre was opened but nil attendance.

Scott Tanner did note that Police were called to the Bowling Club later that night with a few people slightly irritated with their circumstance, ( helped by a few drinks) This only occurred the first night.

### **Tony Byrnes REMO Tamworth**

Activated at 0800 14/1/13 initially to the RFS FCC. Martin Fileman the LEOCON relocated the EOC to VRA building (same day) where contact was made with the ROC & locals.

The Impact Assessment Form was started. MPES staff arrived midday (14/1/13)

1st Impact Assessment completed Tuesday (15/1/13) with LO's from RFS, DPI, Council & MPES Sitreps daily by 4.00PM

Thursday (17/1/13) moved to Tent 3 at RFS Car Park Mobile Phone system upgraded and very fast internet connections available to EOC staff. Communications with RFS FCC improved greatly. LEMC 1st Recovery Meeting was 17/1/13 Recovery committee formed New EOC location, food was better at the VRA. Communications from ROC to EOC very good ROC initiated request for mobile communication & internet upgrades at EOC MPES should have no complaint with regards EOC communication.

### **Mark Fosdick National Parks**

Most manpower resources were in the fire fighting effort. The Park was closed on Tuesday (9/1/13) after Catastrophic Fire Day and a decision by western NP managers maintained the closed status. It was to be reviewed on Sunday the 13/1/13. This decision meant no evacuation of bush walkers was necessary on the 'Sunday' saving valuable manpower and resources

### **Communications & WHS Issues**

ROC & EOC worked well together

RFS Icon access by ROC very good and 'GOLD' to the ROC

Minor Accidents only with Fatigue maybe being neglected by all agencies

RFS has Chaplain available for staff and volunteers. NSWF&R Chaplain & Mental Health Services

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Moves are a foot for the RFS to investigate an adequate area for the EOC at the RFS FCC.

This was endorsed by the LEMC committee as being the major problem for the EOC during the fire, creating a lack of communication both physically ( noise problem at FCC with radios ) and at a personal level ( isolation of EOC staff at VRA ) This needs to be investigated and reported upon as an urgent problem.

### **Recovery Committee**

A Recovery Committee Debrief will be conducted at a later date. Steve Bradshaw was appointed as chair of the committee and community and agency members were invited to the 1st meeting that was 1500Hrs ( 3pm ) 17 January 2013 at the Coonabarabran Town Hall.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

Rod Williams commented on the Coonabarabran VRA and local Police in the work done during the evacuation on the 'Sunday'. Peter Vidler commented on the good communication from Rod Coombes to others, during the emergency.

The MPES has indicated that the Premier will be visiting Coonabarabran on Saturday 22/2/13 to thank the volunteers for their efforts during the fires.

## **SUB COMMITTEE REPORT**

The committee agreed that the Bushfire Evacuation Plan should be revisited with the addition of Timor Road and Bugaldie Areas to the maps.

A new Draft BF plan will be distributed before the next meeting.



# Warrumbungle Recovery Committee Meetings

## Meeting 1

Thursday 17 January 2013

### Meeting Details

**Chair:** Mr Steve Loane  
General Manager

### Attendees: **Members**

Kevin Tighe – Local Emergency Management Officer Rachel  
Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services Raechel  
Squires – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services Tony  
Byrnes – District Emergency Management Officer  
Bob Freebairn – NSW Department of Primary Industries  
Cheryl Pope – NSW Department of Primary Industries (Support Program)  
Deb Wilder – Health Services Manager Coonabarabran, Baradine  
Joel Amiet – Chamber of Commerce  
Greg Wharfe – Insurance Council Australia  
Judy Leach – Mental Health  
Clare Jones – Mental Health  
John Lyons – Mental Health  
Murray Nott – Disaster Welfare Services  
Terry Crowley – Local Western Health Coonabarabran and Baradine  
Mick Rankmore – NSW Department of Primary Industries

### **Observers**

Greg Gibbs – Disaster Welfare Services  
John Randall – Disaster Welfare Services  
Val Kearnes – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Nicole Yeo – Chamber of Commerce (Joblink Plus)  
Glen Crawfield – NPWS  
Sally Morris – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Glennis Mangan – Warrumbungle Shire Council

**Apologies:** David Sturtridge – Roads and Maritime Service

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Town Hall

### Agenda

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Minutes Previous Meeting
3. Recovery Centre Update
4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities
5. Issues Log
6. Other Business
7. Next Meeting

## Summary of Actions Arising from this meeting

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
001	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Fulfil role of Recovery Centre Management through joint appointment.	Complete
002	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Management of registration statistics and information.	Complete
003	Warrumbungle Shire Council	The distribution of Recovery Centre information to remote residents.	Ongoing
004	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services TBC	Creation of a Skills, Goods and Services Sub Committee	Ongoing
005	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Development of processes for debris disposal	Ongoing
006	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The handover of reporting responsibilities following closure of Emergency Operations Centre	Ongoing

### 1. Welcomes and Introductions

#### Discussion

The Chair opened the meeting and all members introduced themselves to the Committee. The Chair announced that NSW Farmers had been requested a Membership on the Committee.

#### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Membership for NSW Farmers	Endorsed

### 3. Recovery Centre Update

#### Discussion

Ministry for Police and Emergency Services outlined the operational requirements of the Recovery Centre.

The Chair appointed Sally Morris and Glennis Mangan as Joint Managers of the Recovery Centre working on a rotating roster.

The Chair appointed the Warrumbungle Shire Council administration staff for registration and intake information management due to appropriate existing systems and security.

Distribution of Recovery Centre details and information to remote residents. Warrumbungle Shire Council has broadcast information via website and media and will extend services to inform remote residents.

#### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Appointment of Joint Managers of the Coonabarabran Recovery Centre.	Endorsed
The use of council administration staff for registration statistics and information.	Endorsed
The distribution of Recovery Centre information to remote residents.	Endorsed

#### 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

##### Discussion

- The concept of the appointment of a Recovery Coordinator to address strategic recovery issues directly was discussed as an option for this event. The role and responsibilities of a Recovery Coordinator were also discussed.
- Creation of a Skills, Goods and Services Sub Committee to develop a process for managing the many offers of same that are being received by the Council and other agencies. Sub Committee to comprise members from Warrumbungle Shire Council, Regional Emergency Management Officer, Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, Department of Primary Industries, Disaster Welfare Services and NSW Health.
- Environmental Protection Agency to review available landfill sites for Asbestos Debris.

##### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Appointment of a Recovery Coordinator.	Endorsed
Creation of a Skills, Goods and Services Sub Committee	Endorsed, members to be appointed.

#### 5. Issues Log

##### Discussion

- Insurance Council Australia reported no representatives available till Monday.
- The chair raised the issue of current procedure for debris disposal following complications for local residents to dispose of food waste after power outages.
- The Department of Primary Industries reported that they are fully deployed and commenced distributing fodder and animal recovery. While inspections have been completed at 45 properties, an increase in numbers is expected as inspections are completed.
  - Animal Losses
    - 250 Sheep
    - 127 Cattle
    - 2 Horses
    - 12 Poultry
  - Animal Injuries
    - 1700 Cattle
    - 200 Sheep
    - 10 Horses
    - 75 Goats
  - 4000Ha of pasture burnt
  - 200 round bales of hay burnt
- Fencing to be reported at a later date
- The District Emergency Management Officer raised the issue of reporting after the cessation of the Emergency Operations Centre. The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services will review this issue at EOC closure.
- The local Health Services representative noted that services have a slightly reduced capacity and a review of adjacent evacuation facilities if Coonabarabran was to be evacuated was being undertaken.

##### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Review of available debris disposal procedure and assistance available to residents.	Endorsed
The handover of reporting responsibilities following closure of Emergency Operations Centre	Endorsed

## **6. Other Business**

### **Discussion**

The Insurance Council Australia stated that a Catastrophic Hotline service is available from their website.

### **7. Next Meeting**

The meeting concluded at 1540Hrs and the Committee agreed to meet at 1300Hrs Saturday, 19 January 2013.

**Meeting 2**  
**Saturday 19 January 2013**

**Meeting Details**

**Chair:** Mr Steve Loane  
General Manager

**Attendees: Members**

Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
Bob Noble – Local Emergency Management Officer  
Raechel Squires – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Mick Rankmore – Department of Primary Industries  
Cheryl Pope – Department of Primary Industries  
David Sturtridge – Roads and Maritime Service  
Deborah Wilden – NSW Health  
Terry Crowley – Health P and C Health  
Judy Leach – Mental Health  
John Randall – Disaster Welfare Service

**Observers**

Phil Southwell – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Chris Druce – NSW Health  
David Pearce – NSW Police  
Lisa Schiff – Great Lakes Council  
Kirsti England – Ambulance Service of NSW Murray Nott – Disaster Welfare Services  
Greg Gibbs – Disaster Welfare Services  
Rachel Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

**Apologies:** Bob Freebairne – Department of Primary Industries  
Robert Smith – National Parks and Wildlife  
Joel Amiet – Chamber of Commerce  
Jannette Fenwick – NSW Farmers  
Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers  
Chris White – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Sally Morris – Manager, Recovery Centre  
Glennis Mangan – Manager, Recovery Centre

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Town Hall

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Minutes Previous Meeting
3. Recovery Centre Update
4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities
5. Issues Log
6. Other Business
7. Next Meeting

## Summary of Actions Arising from this meeting

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
003	Warrumbungle Council	The distribution of Recovery Centre information to remote residents.	Ongoing
005	Warrumbungle Council	Development of processes for general debris disposal for the fire affected.	Ongoing
006	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The handover of reporting responsibilities following closure of Emergency Operations Centre	Ongoing
007	Department of Primary Industries	The Department of Primary Industries to search for portable stock yards.	Ongoing
009	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and has been tasked with developing a skills register.	Ongoing
010	The Chair	Liaise with local Lion and Rotary organisations toward donate goods management.	Ongoing
011	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Creation of a skills register to manage offers of services.	Ongoing
012	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Asbestos Clean up and Disposal: MPES Coordinating a meeting of Heads of Asbestos Committee as these issues have been flagged in Southern Region areas also and a statewide response/plan is needed (Update, HACA Meeting to take place Tuesday a.m. 22 Jan 2013). Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Fire and Rescue, Workcover, NSW Health	
013	Recovery Centre	Recovery Centre to create a register of fire affected requiring arborist services.	Ongoing
014	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Tank flushing: MPES liaising with RFS Dep Commissioner, EMA, (Recovery Programs Branch) re approach and funding. Update Mon 21 Jan 2013.	Ongoing

## 1. Welcomes and Introductions

### Discussion

Apologies:

- Bob Freebairne – Department of Primary Industries
- Robert Smith – National Parks and Wildlife
- Joel Amiet – Chamber of Commerce
- Jannette Fenwick – NSW Farmers
- Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers
- Chris White – Warrumbungle Shire Council
- Sally Morris – Manager, Recovery Centre
- Glennis Mangan – Manager, Recovery Centre

## Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Response
Note the apologies	Noted

## 2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

### Discussion

The Chair noted:

- Actions Arising 001 and 002 have been completed.
- Action 004 is to be discussed further in meeting.
- Action 005 has progressed with a solution to be reported soon.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note progress on actions arising.	Noted

## 3. Recovery Centre Update

### Discussion

- Clarification was provided for 18 January 2013 statistics regarding intake (a form completed upon presentation to the recovery centre) and actual persons assisted.
- Ministry for Police and Emergency Services reported Recovery Centre systems in place and operational without issue.
- Multiple media request to film inside centre refused without complaint.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Recovery Centre update be noted.	Noted.

## 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

### Discussion

- Department of Primary Industries reported a high level of activity on their fodder donation hotline. Stock Disposal had commenced, with assistance from NSW Health. Numbers from private destruction of stock are unknown. A rural support worker is available within the area.
- Stock and pasture figures for 19 January 2013:
  - Losses: 540 sheep, 200 cattle, 2 horses and 12 poultry.
  - Injured: 2500 sheep, 2040 cattle, 10 horses, 75 goats.
  - Pasture: 20,000Ha burnt (approximately 60% private)
- The Livestock Health and Pest Authority have received multiple offers for feed and pasture.
- The Department of Primary Industries is checking for portable yards. It is noted that greater coordination of donation instructions required.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
The Department of Primary Industries to search for portable stock yards.	Noted.

## 5. Donations and the Skills, Goods and Services Committee

### Discussion

- State funding does not make provision for the expenses of managing donated goods. These expenses would be incurred by the local council and the community. Warrumbungle Shire Council have indicated there is no available capacity to manage the process. For this reason the current message is no goods being accepted at the present time.
- The report of high levels of donation collection activities from multiple sources makes the reception of these goods inevitable.
- Council has identified a newly constructed council structure as a potential site for the management and storage of these items.
- Suggested solutions include the auctioning of items to generate cash for the Mayor's fund.
- The Chair will approach local Lion and Rotary organisations to address the responsibility of managing donated goods.

- The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and has been tasked with developing a skills register.
- Offers of skills will be coordinated and registered via Warrumbungle Shire Council.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and develop a skills register.	Endorsed
The Chair to liaise with local Lion and Rotary organisations toward donate goods management.	Endorsed
Creation of a skills register to manage offers of services.	Endorsed

## 6. Other Business

### Discussion

#### Asbestos

- The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services thanked all agencies for their continued involvement with the asbestos issue.
- The Committee was informed that the current asbestos issues in Coonabarabran have been raised at the State level with Workcover, Environmental Protection Agency and Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities.
- Fire & Rescue NSW are in the Warrumbungle area coordinating asbestos control and conducting assessments including photographs of the sites in question.

#### Retardant

- The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services is liaising with Fire & Rescue NSW Hazmat who have provided the following information regarding the retardant:
- The retardant is not toxic but inappropriate for human consumption, however safe for plants and animals.
- It can be flushed from systems with water or high pressure spraying.
- It is okay to flush the material on land, but runoff containment is essential for waterways to avoid algal bloom and fish loss.

#### Welfare

- Currently no fire affected citizens have requested long term accommodation.
- Motel accommodation is being transitioned with medium term cases being referred to Housing NSW.
- Those who will return home upon restoration of utilities and services remain in motels.
- MPES Disaster Welfare Services are coordinating visits to evacuees to assess the circumstances of individuals and families and gauge the length of time it will before residents can move into accommodation of their own.

#### Arborist Services

- 45 qualified arborists will be donating their time and services and are attending the Coonabarabran area from Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo council areas. Contact via Council.
- People will be required to register their requirements at the Recovery Centre for services.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Asbestos Clean up and Disposal: MPES Coordinating a meeting of Heads of Asbestos Committee as these issues have been flagged in Southern Region areas also and a statewide response/plan is needed (Update, HACA Meeting to take place Tuesday a.m. 22 Jan 2013). Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Fire and Rescue, Workcover, NSW Health	Endorsed
Arborist services: Recovery Centre to create a register of fire affected requiring arborist services.	Endorsed
Tank flushing: MPES liaising with RFS Dep	Endorsed



Commissioner, EMA, (Recovery Programs  
Branch) re approach and funding. Update Mon 21 Jan 2013.

## **7. Other Business**

### **Discussion**

ABC Radio will be broadcasting from the Coonabarabran Bowling Club on Tuesday evening. The local producer Susan Atkinson 0419 620 440 is interested in human interest stories. The Chair advised members to contact Ms Atkinson directly.

## **8. Next Meeting**

The meeting concluded at 1605Hrs and the Committee agreed to meet at 1330Hrs Monday, 21 January 2013.

**Meeting 3**  
**Monday, 21 January 2013**

**Meeting Details**

**Chair:** Mr Steve Loane  
General Manager

**Attendees: Members**

Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
Bob Noble – Local Emergency Management Officer  
Raechel Squires – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Mick Rankmore – Department of Primary Industries  
Cheryl Pope – Department of Primary Industries  
David Sturtridge – Roads and Maritime Service  
Deborah Wilden – NSW Health  
Terry Crowley – Health P and C Health  
Judy Leach – Mental Health  
John Randall – Disaster Welfare Service

**Observers**

Phil Southwell – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Chris Druce – NSW Health  
David Pearce – NSW Police  
Lisa Schiff – Great Lakes Council  
Kirsti England – Ambulance Service of NSW  
Murray Nott – Disaster Welfare Services  
Greg Gibbs – Disaster Welfare Services  
Rachel Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

**Apologies:**

Bob Freebairne – Department of Primary Industries  
Robert Smith – National Parks and Wildlife  
Joel Amiet – Chamber of Commerce  
Jannette Fenwick – NSW Farmers  
Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers  
Chris White – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Sally Morris – Manager, Recovery Centre  
Glennis Mangan – Manager, Recovery Centre

**Venue:**

Coonabarabran Town Hall

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Minutes Previous Meeting
3. Recovery Centre Update
4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities
5. Issues Log
6. Other Business
7. Next Meeting

## Summary of Actions Arising

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
006	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The handover of reporting responsibilities following closure of Emergency Operations Centre	Ongoing
009	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and has been tasked with developing a skills register.	Ongoing
011	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Creation of a skills register to manage offers of services.	Ongoing
012	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Asbestos Clean up and Disposal: MPES Coordinating a meeting of Heads of Asbestos Committee as these issues have been flagged in Southern Region areas also and a statewide response/plan is needed (Update, HACA Meeting to take place Tuesday a.m. 22 Jan 2013). Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Fire and Rescue, Workcover, NSW Health	
013	Recovery Centre	Recovery Centre to create a register of fire affected requiring arborist services.	Ongoing
014	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Tank flushing: MPES liaising with Fire and Rescue NSW Dep Commissioner, EMA, (Recovery Programs Branch) re approach and funding. Update Mon 21 Jan 2013.	Ongoing

### 1. Welcomes and Introductions

#### Discussion

Apologies:

#### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note the apologies	Noted

### 2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

#### Discussion

The Chair noted:

Actions Arising 003 007, 008, 010 are complete.

#### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note progress on actions arising.	Noted

### 3. Recovery Centre Update

#### Discussion

No issues for Recovery Centre operations.

#### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Recovery Centre update be noted.	Noted

#### 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

##### Discussion

###### Asbestos

- It is predicted that multiple occurrences of asbestos in disaster recovery sites is a state-wide issue.
- Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities teleconference tomorrow at 1000Hrs to address issues for a state wide solution including Coonabarabran.
- The Ministry for Police and Emergency services advised at the public meeting that the fire affected must report their insurance status to the Recovery Centre. This will provide statistics for the development of a costing model.
- The Ministry for Police and Emergency services is liaising with Emergency Management Australia regarding funding for clean up.

###### Tank Flushing

- There is a need for insurance reporting from the fire affected to determine those with appropriate insurance to cover the cost of flushing and those in need of assistance.
- This issue is time sensitive as the people cannot return to homes until flushing is complete.
- Varying levels of the retardant have been used. NSW Rural Fire Service is reviewing these records.

###### Disaster Welfare Services

###### Arborists

The Chair noted that qualified arborists will be attending Coonabarabran with the skills and knowledge to identify and trim trees

##### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
That the committee note the progress of strategic issues and priorities.	Noted
That the committee note the appointment of Recovery Controller Steve Bradshaw.	Noted

#### 5. Donations and the Skills, Goods and Services Committee

##### Discussion

- State funding does not make provision for the expenses of managing donated goods. These expenses would be incurred by the local council and the community. Warrumbungle Shire Council have indicated there is no available capacity to manage the process. For this reason the current message is no goods being accepted at the present time.
- The report of high levels of donation collection activities from multiple sources makes the reception of these goods inevitable.
- Council has identified a newly constructed council structure as a potential site for the management and storage of these items.
- Suggested solutions include the auctioning of items to generate cash for the Mayor's fund. The Chair will approach local Lion and Rotary organisations to address the responsibility of managing donated goods.
- The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and has been tasked with developing a skills register.
- Offers of skills will be coordinated and registered via Warrumbungle Shire Council.

##### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
The Skills, Goods and Services Subcommittee will continue and develop a skills register.	Endorsed
The Chair to liaise with local Lion and Rotary organisations toward donate goods management.	Endorsed
Creation of a skills register to manage offers of services.	Endorsed

## 6. Issues Log

### Discussion

#### Asbestos

- The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services thanked all agencies for their continued involvement with the asbestos issue.
- The Committee was informed that the current asbestos issues in Coonabarabran have been raised at the State level with Workcover, Environmental Protection Agency and Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities.
- Fire & Rescue NSW are in the Warrumbungle area coordinating asbestos control and conducting assessments including photographs of the sites in question.

#### Retardant

- The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services is liaising with Fire & Rescue NSW Hazmat who have provided the following information regarding the retardant:
- The retardant is not toxic but inappropriate for human consumption, however safe for plants and animals.
- It can be flushed from systems with water or high pressure spraying.
- It is okay to flush the material on land, but runoff containment is essential for waterways to avoid algal bloom and fish loss.

#### Welfare

- Currently no fire affected citizens have requested long term accommodation.
- Motel accommodation is being transitioned with medium term cases being referred to Housing NSW.
- Those who will return home upon restoration of utilities and services remain in motels.
- MPES Disaster Welfare Services are coordinating visits to evacuees to assess the circumstances of individuals and families and gauge the length of time it will before residents can move into accommodation of their own.

#### Arborist Services

- Qualified arborists will be donating their time and services and are attending the Coonabarabran area from Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo council areas. Contact via Council.
- People will be required to register their requirements at the Recovery Centre for services.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Asbestos Clean up and Disposal: MPES Coordinating a meeting of Heads of Asbestos Committee as these issues have been flagged in Southern Region areas also and a statewide response/plan is needed (Update, HACA Meeting to take place Tuesday a.m. 22 Jan 2013). Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Fire and Rescue, Workcover, NSW Health	Endorsed.
Arborist services: Recovery Centre to create a register of fire affected requiring arborist services.	Endorsed.
Tank flushing: MPES liaising with RFS Dep Commissioner, EMA, (Recovery Programs Branch) re approach and funding. Update Mon 21 Jan 2013.	Endorsed.

## 7. Other Business

### Discussion

ABC Radio will be broadcasting from the Coonabarabran Bowling Club on Tuesday evening. The local producer Susan Atkinson 0419 620 440 is interested in human interest stories. The Chair advised members to contact Ms Atkinson directly.

## 8. Next Meeting

The meeting concluded at 1605Hrs and the Committee agreed to meet at 1330Hrs Monday, 21 January 2013.

## Meeting 4

Wednesday, 23 January 2013

### Key Points

- It is predicted that multiple occurrences of asbestos in disaster recovery sites is a state-wide issue.
- Community is becoming impatient and will begin to dispose waste themselves anywhere they can.
- MPES is liaising with the RFS who initially suggested the retardant has only affected a few properties and that it did not appear to have been dropped on residences

### Meeting Details

**Chair:** Mr Steve Loane  
General Manager

**Attendees: Members**  
Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
Raechel Squires – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Terry Crowley – Health P and C Health  
Judy Leach – Mental Health  
John Randall – Disaster Welfare Service  
Steve Bradshaw - Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

#### **Observers**

Chris White – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
David Pearce – NSW Police  
Rachel Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Kate Roy - Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers  
Phil Southwell - Warrumbungle Shire Council

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Community Services Building

### Agenda

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Minutes Previous Meeting
3. Recovery Centre Update
4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities
5. Issues Log
6. Other Business
7. Next Meeting

### Summary of Actions Arising

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
012	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Workcover, NSW Health	Ongoing
013	Recovery Centre	Recovery Centre to create a register of fire affected requiring arborist services.	Ongoing

### 1. Welcomes and Introductions

#### Discussion

The Chair noted the arrival of Steve Bradshaw, Recovery Coordinator.

Apologies:

### Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Response
Note the apologies	Noted

## 2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

### Discussion

The Chair noted:

- Actions Arising 006, 009, 011 & 014 are complete.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note progress on actions arising.	Noted

## 3. Recovery Centre Update

### Discussion

- The Recovery Centre will be open over the Australia Day Long Week-end 8.00am to 6.00pm. All agencies will be present at the Recovery Centre on Saturday.
- On Sunday and Monday not all agencies will be present. Recovery Centre administration staff will be available to take registrations and provide assistance. Counselling and welfare support services staff are "on call" to attend the Recovery Centre if need be.
- The Recovery Centre will return to normal operations on Tuesday 29 January.
- Save the Children will no longer be present at the Recovery Centre as of 23 January 2013

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Recovery Centre update be noted.	Noted

## 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

### Discussion

Asbestos

- It is predicted that multiple occurrences of asbestos in disaster recovery sites is a state-wide issue.
- Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities teleconference was held to address issues for a state wide solution including Coonabarabran.
- The Ministry for Police and Emergency services is liaising with Emergency Management Australia regarding funding for clean up.

Tank Flushing

- There is a need for insurance reporting from the fire affected to determine those with appropriate insurance to cover the cost of flushing and those in need of assistance.
- Rural Fire Service has conducted aerial surveillance and determined the fire retardant has not affected any primary residences.

Disaster Welfare Services

- DWS Staff will be directly contacting households that have been destroyed, by phone, to assess needs, and provide updated information

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
That the committee note the progress of strategic issues and priorities.	Noted
That the committee note the appointment of Recovery Controller Steve Bradshaw.	Noted

## 6. Issues Log

### Discussion

#### Asbestos

- A teleconference scheduled for 1500 Wednesday 23 January with Council, MPES, EPA, WorkCover, Services NSW & Transport to discuss the assessment of asbestos affected properties, transport and disposal of asbestos.
- Destroyed properties will be given priority for asbestos removal
- Concerns were raised that the community is becoming impatient and they may begin to dispose of waste themselves, anywhere they can

#### Retardant

- The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services is liaising with RFS who have initially suggested the retardant has only affected a few properties and that it did not appear to have been dropped on residences
- Richard Cotterill has been appointed by Rob Rogers to assist with fire retardant issue

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Asbestos Clean up and Disposal: MPES Coordinating a meeting of Heads of Asbestos Committee as these issues have been flagged in Southern Region areas also and a statewide response/plan is needed. Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Transport, Workcover, NSW Health & Services.	Endorsed.
Tank flushing: MPES liaising with RFS Dep Commissioner, EMA, (Recovery Programs Branch) re approach and funding. Update Mon 21 Jan 2013.	Endorsed.

## 7. Other Business

### Discussion

- ABC Radio have offered to assist by broadcasting information.
- Recovery Centre to coordinate future Public Meetings, not the RFS.
- Stuart Davies raised concerns that some individuals are getting grants from Centrelink they are not entitled too
- Terry Crowley offered to contact everybody in Binnaway with updated information regarding asbestos and tank flushing

## 8. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to meet at 1500Hrs Friday, 25 January 2013 at Coonabarabran Community Services Building. Steve Loane GM will no longer attend Committee Meetings. Chris White will represent Council. The Chair is now Steve Bradshaw, Recovery Coordinator.



**Meeting 5**  
**Friday, 25 January 2013**

**Key Points:**

- Attendance to Recovery Centre had dropped off.
- Mental Health have noted an increase in clients, which have been referred by their local GP. NSW Health monitoring town water.
- Council concern that outreach and assistance is not reaching those residents who fall just outside the WSC boundary.

**Meeting Details**

**Chair:** Mr Steve Bradshaw  
Recovery Coordinator

**Attendees: Members**  
Steve Loane – WSC General Manager  
Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
Kerry – Housing NSW  
Terry Crowley – Health P and C Health  
Judy Leach – Mental Health  
John Randall – Disaster Welfare Service  
Grant Clissold – Public Works  
Bob Freebairn – Public Works  
Danny Byrnes - DPI

**Observers**

Scott Tanner – NSW Police  
Kate Roy - Ministry for Police and Emergency Services  
Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers  
Phil Southwell - Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Darren Vatcher – NSW RFS  
Peter Brookhouse – NPWS  
Deborah Wilden – Health  
Ingo Steppat - Health

**Apologies**

Cheryl Pope

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Community Services Building

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Minutes Previous Meeting
3. Recovery Centre Update
4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities
5. Other Business

**Summary of Actions Arising**

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
012	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Liaison to continue via MPES with Council, EPA, Workcover, NSW Health	Ongoing

## 1. Welcomes and Introductions

### Discussion

The Chair thanked everybody for attending.

Apologies:

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note the apologies	Noted

## 2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

### Discussion

The Chair noted:

- Actions Arising 013 are complete.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Note progress on actions arising.	Noted

## 3. Recovery Centre Update

### Discussion

- The Recovery Centre Manager noted the numbers attending the Recovery Centre have significantly dropped off
- The Recovery Centre will return to normal operations on Tuesday 29 January.
- Mental Health have noted an increase in clients, and that they have been referred by their local GP
- Community Newsletter is being distributed by the VRA on Saturday 26 January 2013

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
Recovery Centre update be noted.	Noted

## 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

### Discussion

- NSW Health monitoring town water and have circulated Information Sheets regarding water quality and public health concerns.
- NSW Health will have available specialist adolescent mental health workers in the Recovery Centre on Monday 28 January 2013
- NSW Health has scheduled a Bush Fire Health Support Workers Meeting on Thursday 13 January 2013.
- The Mayors Bush Fire Appeal will be used to fund water supply and delivery for residents. 10,000 litres of water will be available upon application. St Vincent de Paul will be managing the process.
- Rural Fire Service will clarify issues around property 'damaged by fire' and the process for residents to claim for damage

- Council is concerned that outreach and assistance is not reaching those residents who fall just outside the WSC boundary.
- DWS Staff have been contacting households that have been destroyed, by phone, to assess needs, and provide updated information. 27 have been completed.
- NSWPF will clarify the various markings outside of residential properties and report on meanings i.e. red cross, green cross, police tape, SES tape, blue tape.
- VRA to remove police tape over the weekend, as arson squad has now completed inspection of properties
- Housing NSW Discussion regarding their involvement and withdrawal from Recovery Centre because of lack of numbers but maintain 1800 number and dealing with issues that way. Objection to their withdrawal made by GM.
- The Chair suggested four subcommittees to the Recovery Committee: Psychosocial, Economical, Infrastructure and Environment Subcommittees.

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
That the committee note the progress of strategic issues and priorities.	Noted

### Response to Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Response</i>
That the committee endorse four subcommittees as suggested by The Chair	Endorsed.

## 5. Other Business

### Discussion

- Council to firm up process for rebuilding, and to speed up process whilst still adhering to legislation

## 6. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to meet on Tuesday 1330 hrs, 29 January 2013 at Coonabarabran Community Services Building..

## Meeting 6

Tuesday, 29 January 2013

### Key Points:

- Asset and Infrastructure assessments of Airport and Landing Strip to be carried out by NSW Rural Fire Service.
- The Recovery Centre reported falling numbers for agencies over the weekend, however there were some presenting for Council information.
- Housing NSW no longer stationed at Recovery Centre.
- Request for temporary dwellings on properties destroyed by the fire – further investigation and details to be provided.

### Meeting Details

**Chair:** Steve Bradshaw – Recovery Coordinator

#### Attendees: **Members**

Mr Steve Loane - Warrumbungle Shire Council  
 Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
 John Randall – Disaster Welfare Service  
 Margaret Kitching - National Parks and Wildlife Service  
 Ingo Steppart – NSW Health  
 NSW Rural Fire Service  
 NSW Health  
 NSW Department of Primary Industries  
 Housing NSW  
 NSW Public Works

#### **Observers**

Tony Meppem – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
 Glennis Mangan – Warrumbungle Shire Council  
 Phil Southwell – Warrumbungle Shire Council

**Apologies:** Rachel Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers

Ivan Mills – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Community Services Building

### Summary of Actions Arising

Serial	Responsible party	Action	Status
015	NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Public Works	Complete assessment of Airport and Landing Strip. NSW Public works to review public areas.	Ongoing
016	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Coordinate discussion into changing Recovery Centre hours of operation.	Complete and
017	NSW Public Works	Development of a Cleanup plan and Flow Chart for Recovery Centre and other agencies.	Ongoing
018	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Second newsletter to be developed and published.	Ongoing
019	NSW Health	NSW Health to provide information on communities.	Ongoing bushfire impacts on
020	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Investigate requests for temporary dwellings on damaged properties.	Ongoing and

## 1. Welcomes and Introductions

### Discussion

The Chair noted the following apologies:

Rachel Nibbs – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

Elliot Shannon – NSW Farmers

Ivan Mills – Ministry for Police and Emergency Services

### Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Response
Note the apologies	Noted

## 2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

### Discussion

The Chair noted the Minutes and actions arising.

Recommendation	Response
Note progress on actions arising.	Noted

## 3. Business Arising

### Discussion

Asset and Infrastructure assessments of Airport and Landing Strip to be carried out by NSW Rural Fire Service. Public Works to assess guard rails and public areas.

Recovery Centre opening hours to be reviewed and published in local paper. Cleanup plan and flow chart to be developed for presentation to Recovery Committee and other agencies.

Second news letter to be published.

Deb Wilden of NSW Health to investigate and report the long term effects of bushfires on the Community.

### Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Response
NSW RFS to complete assessment of Airport and NSW Public works to review public areas.	Listed as Action Arising. Landing Strip.
Ministry for Police and Emergency Services to discussion into changing Recovery Centre hours of operation.	Listed as Action Arising. coordinate
NSW Public Works to develop Cleanup plan and Recovery Centre and other agencies.	Listed as Action Arising. Flow Chart for
Second newsletter to be developed and	Listed as Action Arising. published.
NSW Health to provide information on bushfire communities.	Listed as Action Arising. impacts on

#### 4. Recovery Centre Update

##### Discussion

The Recovery Centre reported falling numbers for agencies over the weekend, however there were some presenting for Council Information

The NSW Rural Fire Service has ceased catering services at the location. Cleaner hours have been reduced to meet lower needs.

Security to be more visible.

Courtyard to be vacated by 21 February 2013 for prior commitment.

Recommendation	Response
Recovery Centre update be noted.	Noted

#### 4. Agency Strategic Issues and Priorities

##### Discussion

Housing NSW no longer stationed at Recovery Centre, Hotline information has been provided and representatives can return upon request.

Steve Loane raised the requests for temporary dwellings on properties destroyed by fire. Further investigation and details to be provided to committee.

NSW Rural Fire Service, provided instructions for lodging a claim for damage from fire fighting activities.

Disaster Welfare Services has provided a list of updated information based on phone consultations with residents on the damaged properties list.

National Parks and Wildlife provided a information sheet on Burned Area – Rapid Risk Assessment and the deployment of a Burned Area Assessment Team. NSW Health reported NSW Public Works reported ongoing work with Warrumbungle Shire Council on the Asbestos Disposal Plan and is seeking a list of destroyed properties.

NSW Department of Primary Industries reported that fodder support continues and fencing has been referred to BlazeAid.

Warrumbungle Shire Council Environmental representative reported Asbestos disposal remain the primary concern and they continue working in consultation with the Recovery Coordinator.

The Regional Emergency Management Officer requested that all agencies remain mindful of the welfare of the BlazeAid volunteers.

##### Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	Response
Ministry for Police and Emergency Services to investigate requests for temporary dwellings on damaged properties.	

Listed as Action Arising.

Note all other agency issues Noted

#### 7. Other Business

##### Discussion

- Mr Steve Loane requested minutes be taken for all future Public Meetings.

#### 8. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to meet at 1330Hrs Friday, 1 February 2013 at Coonabarabran Community Services Building.

## Meeting 7

Monday 4th February 2013 - 1330 Hrs

### Key Points:

- Issue of mental health of some farmers required to shoot their livestock – issues will develop as time goes on if nothing is done.
- WSC working through affected areas and documenting the destruction (so far 16 properties) – slower than first expected, each taking 1.5 hours.
- Indigo Steppart and Noel Gilbert are working together on Timor Dam water supply – a large amount of debris had entered the dam and they are going to test the result which will provide an indication of the filtering capacity of water supply for the town.
- A total of 24 private tanks had been sampled with mixed results, no pattern had emerged.

Attendees: Members

Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer

Bob Freebairn - DPI Indigo Steppart – Health Deb Wilden – Health Mark Fosdick - NPWS  
Phil Southwell - Warrumbungle Shire Council (minutes)

### Meeting Details

**Chair:** Steve Bradshaw – Recovery Coordinator

**Attendees: Members**

Stuart Davies – Regional Emergency Management Officer  
Bob Freebairn – DPI  
Ingo Steppart – NSW Health  
Deb Wilden – Health  
Mark Fosdick – NPWS  
Phil Southwell – Warrumbungle Shire Council

**Apologies:** Mr Steve Loane - Warrumbungle Shire Council  
Darren Vatcher Zone Manager RFS Coona

**Venue:** Coonabarabran Community Services Building

Business Arising

1. The Shire Newsletter.

Will be distributed by mail, this Wednesday. Chris White (Shire) has organised mail out.

Items to include Bugaldie Meeting on Wednesday 6.30 pm at Hall

This Item to be included on ABC radio if possible (Phil Southwell to check with Chris)

2. Sub Committees

Four Sub committees are up and running in some form.

- They are :-
- |                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Economic       | - Aileen Bell (Shire) |
| 2. Human Services | - John Lyons (Health) |
| 3. Infrastructure | - Tony Meppem (Shire) |
| 4. Environmental  | - Mark Fosdick (NP's) |

Sub Committee chair (listed above) to report back to Recovery Committee

3. Mark Fosdick reported that the planned bus trip to Siding Sprigs was cancelled due to concerns about the safety of the road after the recent rain and storms.

General Business

Deb Wilden ( Health) raised an issue with regards the mental health of some farmers that have been required to shoot livestock. Mental Health personnel need to make contact with these people. These issues will develop as time goes on, if nothing is done.

Deb was asked to raise this issue with the Human Services Sub Committee, John Lyons.

Phil Southwell (Shire) reported that the shire (Aaron) was working through the affected areas, documenting the destruction and had completed 16 properties. This was slower than first anticipated and will take a few weeks to complete. Each property has averaged 1.5 hours each.

Stuart Davies (REMO)

Raised the concern about the 'Mayors Fund' and the need to maintain transparency with such matters. The management of these funds is reflected on all such fundraising whether fire or floods throughout Australia.

Bob Freebairne (DPI)

Reported that Bill Atkinson who has been involved in the Fodder distribution, has finished his brief and that local staff will continue with his duties.

Run off into dams has created problems with livestock and will continue for some time.

Indigo Steppat (Health)

1. Reported that he was working with Noel (Shire) regarding the Timor Dam water supply

A large amount of debris had entered the dam and test result this Wednesday will provide an indication of the filtering capacity of water system, for the town.

2. A total of 24 private tanks had been sampled with mixed results, no pattern has emerged.

Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to meet at 1330 Hrs Thursday , 7th February 2013 at Coonabarabran Community Services Building.

Week starting 11th February 2013

Suggested that only one Recovery Meeting per week being :- Monday's at 1330 Hrs ( 1.30pm)

Thus the following meeting will be Monday 11th Feb 2013. (To be confirmed on Thursday)  
Meeting Concluded 1410 Hrs



## Meeting 9

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Key Points:

- Housing NSW – considered closing hotline due to lack of numbers and the expense.
- Coonabarabran landfill still being excavated.
- Due to volume and waste exceeding initial estimates – Mendooran land fill will be excavated.
- Siding Springs waste transported to Dubbo Landfill.
- Shed inspections due to start soon.
- NSW Department of Primary Industries assessments complete and Category C assistance is available.
- Recovery centre moving to Council Building.
- Concern of falling trees along school bus routes – RMS conducted an inspection of bus stops only.
- 32 tests complete on private water supply sources..
- Town water turbidity has increased due to the temporary use of alum as a flocculent. The turbidity is expected to drop as water services are returned to normal.
- So far 49 of 51 houses been expected – 26 suspected to contain friable asbestos.

### Personnel Attending:

Mr Steve Bradshaw	Chair, Recovery Coordinator	Present
Mr Steve Loane	Warrumbungle Shire Council General Manager	Present
Rachel Nibbs	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Present
Phil Southwell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Kerry McDermott	Housing NSW	
Deb Wilden	NSW Health	Present
Ingo Steppat	NSW Health	Present
Ivan Mills	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Present

No.	Agenda Item	Owner	Status
1	Meeting Opened 01:38 PM The Chair noted agencies in attendance.	Chair	Noted
2	Minutes from Previous Meeting Minutes approved for Meeting 8, 4 February 2013	Chair	Endorsed
3	Business Arising		

<p>NSW Housing (Family and Community Services)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Service has been continued by phone through referrals from Recovery Centre.</li> <li>-There is potential for an increased number of cases as temporary accommodation arrangements with friends or family change.</li> <li>-Housing NSW cannot facilitate property management for those donating free rental and housing. This must be managed between owner and occupier.</li> <li>-Housing NSW is considering closing the 24 hour hotline due to a reduction in cases and expense of service. The Recovery Committee and Council raised a number of points for Housing NSW management to take into consideration before this action.</li> </ul>		Noted
<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The initial assessments conducted by Aaron Parker are almost complete with only 4 houses outstanding.</li> <li>-The Coonabarabran landfill is still being excavated.</li> <li>-Due to the volume of waste exceeding initial estimates, the planned Mendooran land fill will be excavated. The decision surrounding zoning and distribution of waste between tips is being discussed.</li> <li>-Siding Springs waste will be transported to Dubbo to save local</li> </ul>		Noted
<p>Landfill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Due to the progress of house inspections, shed inspections are due to commence shortly.</li> <li>-Treasury funding for cleanup has been secured.</li> <li>-NSW Department of Primary Industries assessments are complete and Category C assistance will be available.</li> <li>-The Coonabarabran Recovery Centre is due to close on 15 February 2013. The new Council building will continue recovery centre services through Centre Manager Glennis Mangan. The hotline will also be diverted to ensure continuity of service.</li> <li>-The Mayor's \$1,000 displacement payment remains in place.</li> </ul>		Noted
<p>The Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-There is concern in the community for falling trees along school bus routes. Council confirmed that multiple reports of fallen trees had been received and rectified by Council.</li> <li>-Roads and Maritime Service have conducted an inspection of bus stops only.</li> <li>-Committee to investigate the funding for clearing of trees from roads, potentially from Roads and Maritime Service and the arrangements for removal of trees along National Parks and Wildlife fence lines.</li> </ul>		To be actioned.
<p>NSW Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-32 tests have been completed on private water sources from referrals received at the Recovery Centre.</li> <li>-The Town water turbidity has increased due to the temporary use of alum as a flocculent. The turbidity is expected to drop as water services are returned to normal.</li> </ul>		Noted

	<p>Ministry for Police and Emergency Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-49 of the 51 fire affected properties have been inspected.</li> <li>-26 are suspected to contain friable asbestos</li> <li>-Chris White of Council is coordinating a major publication for the local newspaper regarding insurance types, the Human Services John Lyon appointment and Recovery Centre shutdown.</li> <li>-The Deputy Director General of Public Works has agreed to the task of managing natural disaster reimbursements for asbestos cleanup and will provide an outline of the management plan shortly.</li> <li>-The use of the Public Works project management service ensures suitably experienced staff manage contractor accreditation and NDRRA matters.</li> <li>-Council are in full support of the Public Works solution as it solves the probity issue associated with tenders if the Council managed the process.</li> </ul>		Noted
	<p>NSW Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Deborah Wilden will commence leave this week, Tracey Wood is the nominated replacement for this period.</li> </ul>		Noted
	<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The NSW Rural Fire Service is planning its debrief and will notify Council.</li> <li>-The Local Emergency Management Committee has planned a debrief for 18 February 2013.</li> </ul>		Noted
5	<p>Other Business</p> <p>In the public meeting, the issue of mixed insurance company response to the fire affected was raised. The committee agreed that while there is no direct responsibility for the process between claimant and insurance company as part of general assistance to the community cases of this nature should be forwarded to the Recovery Centre.</p> <p>The Council raised the issue of a deadline for the cleanup process. Public Works as the project manager will have to establish a time line and deadline for contractors. Exemptions from WorkCover are for a limited period.</p>		Noted
7	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday, 14 February 2013 at 05:00 PM.</p>		Noted

## Meeting 10

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Key Points:

- Home inspections complete.
- Complaints of erosion damage from grader use during fire fighting activities. NSW RFS stated that after fire inspection had been completed on grader usage and little rehabilitation issues were identified.
- Heavy rain (40mm) following the fire contributed to erosion. Damage associated with the fire fighting activities is usually classified as fire damage and claimed through erosion.
- All private water samples results and tank cleaning instructions passed onto owners.
- Three reports of smoke from Northern and Guinema Road were received. Crews have responses to a handful of lightening strikes in that area.
- No ground fuel to carry fired quickly – they are well contained.
- Extended duration of recovery prompted the Economic (Small Business and Tourism) Subcommittee to request long term mental health assistance in Coonabarabran.
- A new tourism plan must be developed as previous National Park and Siding Springs tourism collateral is currently not available.
- National Parks and Wildlife to establish I new visitor centre as soon as possible and continue to provide boundary fencing supplies.
- LHPA to continue to administer feed donations.
- Economic impact of disaster has started impacting primary produces related industries such as cattle transport.

### Personnel Attending:

Mr Steve Bradshaw	Chair, Recovery Coordinator	Present
Mr Steve O'Callaghan	NSW Rural Fire Service	Present
Mr Stuart Davies	Regional Emergency Management Officer	Present
Mr Phil Southwell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Bob Freebairne	NSW Department of Primary Industries	Present
Ms Catherine Wood	Bernardo's	Present
Mr Mike Myers	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Ms Christine White	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Ingo Steppat	NSW Health	Present
Ms Aileen Bell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Ivan Mills	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Present

### Apologies:

Mr Darren Vatcher	NSW Rural Fire Service	
Ms Kerry Mcdermott	Housing NSW	
Mr John Lyons	NSW Health	
Ms Deb Wilden	NSW Health	
Mr Tony Meppem	Warrumbungle Shire Council	
Mr Mal Johnston	Coonabarabran High School	

No.	Agenda Item	Owner	Status
1	Meeting Opened 01:38 PM  The Chair noted the apologies.	Chair	Noted
2	Minutes from Previous Meeting  Minutes approved for Meeting 9, 7 February 2013	Chair	Endorsed
3	Recovery Centre Updates  The Chair noted the Recovery Centre intake figures for Monday to Wednesday and reminded members of the Recovery Centre relocation to Council Chambers from Monday 18 January 2013. Glennis Mangan will continue the Recovery Centre services from 09:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday to Friday. Public Works will return to Coonabarabran on Monday 18 January 2013 to dismantle the centre.	Chair	Noted
4	Business Arising		
	Warrumbungle Shire Council (Council) -Aaron Parker from Council has complete home inspections and commenced on other structures, there is no confirmed timeframe for this to be completed. -There have been complaints of erosion damage from grader use during fire fighting activities. The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) representative stated that after fire inspections had been completed on grader usage and little rehabilitation issues were identified. -The committee noted that heavy rain activity (40mm) following the fire may have contributed heavily to erosion. Damage associated with fire fighting activities is usually classified as fire damage and claimed through insurance. -RFS representative to contact Darren Vartcher to confirm RFS lodgement process as announced in the public meeting.	Council	Action Arising: RFS
	Health NSW All private water sample results have been passed to owners. Tank cleaning instructions and information distributed to owners as required. Council noted that there has been a low intake in the Mayors Fund Potable Water, however this will increase as tanks issues area rectified.		Noted
	NSW Rural Fire Service - Crews have been patrolling the fire edge. -Three reports of smoke from the Northern and Guinema Rd area have been recieved. -Crews have responses to a handful of lightning strikes in the area. -There is no ground fuel to carry fires quickly, fires are well contained.		Noted

<p>Economic (Small Business and Tourism) Subcommittee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Inaugural meeting held on 6 February 2013.</li> <li>-Members include Department of Primary Industries, National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS), NSW Farmers, Tourism Association, Chamber of Commerce and Siding Springs.</li> <li>-NSW Farmers explained the issues experienced by primary producers over the past few years. The extended duration of recovery prompted the Subcommittee to request long term mental health assistance in Coonabarabran.</li> <li>-Local purchasing is a primary goal and the Subcommittee has approached Council directly to request an increase to the threshold conditions for local acquisitions from 5% to 10%.</li> <li>-The subcommittee is seeking additional funding for tourism advertising through Council and approaching the ministerial level.</li> <li>-A new tourism plan must be developed as previous National Park and Siding Springs tourism collateral is currently not available. There has been a temporary withdrawal from all promotions while this is developed.</li> <li>-National Parks and Wildlife to establish a new Visitors Centre as soon as possible, and continue to provide boundary fencing supplies.</li> <li>-The Subcommittee will coordinate community meetings for the small tourism, small business to push the business community together.</li> </ul>		Action Arising: Health NSW
<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council (Public Information)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The third newsletter will be released shortly according to the 7 to 10 day schedule. Using this document has a letter box drop has proven most effective communication tool and will be combined with website updates and Recovery Centre information.</li> <li>-Aaron Parker has raised the issue of returning inspection requests in the latest newsletter.</li> <li>-The Governor General will visit Coonabarabran on 18 February 2013. An invitation has been extended to emergency services personnel.</li> <li>-Phase 2 of the Mayoral fund has been allocated.</li> <li>\$40,000 allocated to the Blazeaid project to support the agency</li> <li>\$100,000 allocated to reimburse fencing materials up to \$1000 per km for roadside fencing.</li> </ul>		Noted
<p>NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Livestock Health and Pest Association continue to administer feed donations.</li> <li>-The economic impact of the disaster has started impacted primary producer related industries such as cattle transport.</li> <li>- DPI to organise with local Anglican Church for Blazeaid to distribute Samaritans Purse cleanup kits.</li> </ul>	DPI	Action Arising: DPI

	<p>Human Services Subcommittee (Charities)</p> <p>-Mayor Fund Allocations: St Vincent's De Paul - distribution complete. Centre Care - \$6,000 left. Barnardo's - \$2,000.</p> <p>-Initial use of charities has been slow due to not knowing, competing priorities and hesitation to engage charities.</p> <p>-Message not reaching all of the community, recommends door to door process for community engagement.</p> <p>-The Recovery Committee raised the numerous communication channels in use.</p> <p>-Members raised the issue of multiple registrations forms for various grants and agencies. While the Recovery Centre has a single registration form and process, new grants and funding require further visits. Chair to take recommendation under advice for final report of a single registration point and process as an improvement of the intake process for all applications.</p>	HS	Action Arising: Chair
	<p>Human Services (Youth)</p> <p>-All major sources reviewed.</p> <p>-Teachers monitoring all students with emphasis on those directly affected by fires.</p> <p>-No cases have been raised at this point, due to delay of symptoms to present themselves.</p> <p>-The Teachers Federation will hold a meeting in the first week of March. Assistance for teachers dealing with the fire affected will be requested.</p>	HS	Noted
5	<p>Other Business</p> <p>No other business raised.</p>	Chair	Noted
7	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday, 21 February 2013 at 15:30 PM.</p>	Chair	Noted

## Meeting 11

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013

### Key Points:

- DPI to supervise distribution of Samaritans Purse clean up kits.
- Expansion of roadside fencing funding to include Gilgandra. Initial \$100,000 is fully funded this does not cover the total amount of roadside fencing lost and a first in policy is in use.
- Mixed recovery approach to rebuilding or relocating.
- Valley erosion remains a major issue for the National Park and surrounding properties.
- Discussions on expected type of after fire plant growth and potential for weeds. Expected that native grasses will be fast growing.
- Town water remains good quality levels with increased alum due to use as flocculent. Turbidity is down – increasing the effectiveness of chlorine.
- All private water samples tests results have been distributed and potential for follow up consultation being discussed,
- Fodder request increased in the past week.
- Donation service expected to finish 1<sup>st</sup> March – expansion of 2 or 3 weeks is being arranged.
- Delays of fodder to reach Coonabarabran due to transport shortage in the area during and immediately after the fire.
- Mobile network reception remains an issue as poor communications hinder business development and growth.

### Personnel Attending:

Mr Steve Bradshaw	Chair, Recovery Coordinator	Present
Ingo Steppat	NSW Health	Present
Bob Freebaine	NSW Department of Primary Industry	Present
Ms Chris White	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Phil Southwell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
John Lyons	Chair, Human Services Subcommittee	Present
Mr Mark Fosdick	National Parks and Wildlife Service	Present
Aileen Bell	Chair, Small business and Tourism Subcommittee.	Present
Ivan Mills	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, Response and Recovery	Present

### Apologies:

Steve Loane	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Apology
Tony Meppem	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Apology
Catherine Wood	Barnardo's	Apology
Deborah Wilden	NSW Health	Apology
Mr Darren Vartcher	NSW Rural Fire Service	Apology
Ms Kerry Mcdermott	NSW Housing	Apology



No.	Agenda Item	Owner	Status
1	Meeting Opened 13:30  The chair noted the apologies.		
2	Actions Arising from Previous Meeting 10 - John Lyons to provide information on Mental Health Services in Warrumbungle area for Chair recommendation in final report.	HS	
	-Department of Primary Industries to supervise distribution of Samaritans Purse clean up kits. -Blazeaid has extended their service to include the distribution of equipment as required, this includes the clean up kits.	DPI	Complete
	-NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) claims process for damage from fire fighting activities required. -Options for repair provided at public meeting. Residents can claim through their insurance for reimbursement from the Treasury Managed Fund, or await direct claim through agency, instructions to be provided 25 February 2013.	RFS	Complete
3	Minutes from Previous Meeting  Minutes approved for Meeting 10, 14 February 2013	Chair	Endorsed
4	Recovery Centre Update  The Chair noted the Recovery Centre figures for the week.	Chair	Noted
	The Chair raised the continued service of Glennis Mangan as Manager of the Coonabarabran Recovery Centre. The Chair proposed the following exit strategy: -Monday 25 February: Two weeks at full duties as currently operating, providing time for John Lyons to move into Council Chambers -Monday 11 March: Two weeks light duties as required to assist John Lyons as a handover period. -This is subject to review at the end of the four weeks, including the option of extension. - John Lyons to arrange Support Worker Training for Glennis Mangan.	Chair	Endorsed
5	Business Arising Recovery Committee Exit Strategy  -The Chair stated that the four main subcommittees have been formed to replace the Recovery Coordinator and take over all current and future issues. It is important that they are established and operating as the Recovery Coordinator is commencing discussion of potential exit strategies. -Chair of the Environmental Subcommittee noted that their first meeting is being planned.	Chair	Endorsed

<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council – Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Chris White stated she will be on leave in the coming weeks and has appointed Liz Cuts in her absence. Liz will be assuming all duties including attending the Recovery Committee Meeting and producing the Community Newsletter.</li> <li>-The next newsletter is in development and will reinforce the current assistance messages with the inclusion of more info on Mental Health and National parks and Wildlife.</li> </ul>	WSC	Noted
<p>NSW Rural Fire Service After Action Debrief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Chair attended the RFS debrief and described the findings as relevant supportive with a number of constructive points toward the final recovery report.</li> <li>-The issue of official statements was raised, with some Gilgandra residents yet to provide statements to the NSW Police.</li> </ul>	Chair	Noted
<p>Donations and Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The WSC raised the expansion of the Roadside Fencing Funding to include Gilgandra. While the initial \$100,000 is fully funded, this does not cover the total amount of roadside fencing lost and a first in policy is in use.</li> <li>-The gap in funding raised the potential for Charities to support the fencing fund.</li> <li>-Members raised the issue of donations management and Charities with strict guidelines that do not allow support of the Mayor's Fund. Distribution of finds for these charities is hindered as confidential fire affected information cannot be distributed.</li> <li>-Members suggested a charity groups meeting so agencies can discuss matters and coordinate donations. The Chair will approach the WSC Mayor to arrange the meeting.</li> </ul>	Chair	Noted
<p>Human Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Human Services has been meeting with Glennis daily to obtain clients. A number of initial consultations have been completed and there is a mixed recovery approach between rebuilding or relocating.</li> <li>-An increase in the number of consultations is expected.</li> <li>-A member raised the issue of a Teachers Federation Seminar which will provide support services for teachers. Members requested this service be provided to non members of the local Catholic School.</li> <li>-John Lyons to follow up on invitations for Catholic and non teacher support staff.</li> </ul>	HS	Noted
<p>National Parks and Wildlife Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Valley erosion remains a major issue for the National Park and surrounding properties.</li> <li>-The Environmental Subcommittee will meet in the coming days.</li> <li>-Members discussed the expected type of after fire plant growth and potential for weeds. It is expected that native grasses will be fast growing, this is a point of discussion for the subcommittee and will result in information for land holders and potential grazing management seminar.</li> </ul>	NPWS	Noted

	<p>NSW Health (Water)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Town water remains at good quality levels with increased alum due to use as a flocculent.</li> <li>-Turbidity is down, which increases the effectiveness of chlorine.</li> <li>-All private water sample tests results have been distributed and potential for follow-up consultations is being discussed.</li> </ul>	NSW Health	Noted
	<p>Department of Primary Industries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Fodder requests have increased over the past week.</li> <li>-The donations service is due to finish 1 March 2013, however an extension of two or three weeks is being arranged.</li> <li>-The Chair raised the issue of delays for initial fodder to reach Coonabarabran, DPI identified the issue as a transportation shortage in the area during and immediately after the fire.</li> <li>-DPI requested that fodder donations and distribution message continue to be put through all communications channels.</li> <li>-Chair to forward official letter of thank you to LHPA.</li> </ul>	DPI	Noted
	<p>Small Business and Tourism Subcommittee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A small business community meeting was held on 18 February 2013 and identified a number of ideas.</li> <li>-There are suggestions for tours of fire affected areas to develop support and knowledge base of what has happened.</li> <li>-The subcommittee is supporting the re use of astronomy as the main tourism element as it is a strong attribute and point of differentiation.</li> <li>-The new strategy and material will be used at the end of May as tourism advertising commences.</li> <li>-The subcommittee is still pushing for Council to change the purchasing threshold and increase its local purchasing.</li> <li>-The subcommittee will be approaching large organisations with interests in the community such as ANU and AAO for funding.</li> <li>-Mobile network reception remains an issue as poor communications hinder business development and growth.</li> <li>-The Chair noted that communications infrastructure in the area will be a primary recommendation of his report and he has already voiced this issue with the Federal Minister.</li> </ul>	SB SC	Noted
6	<p>Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The new Community Newsletter will be released next Thursday.</li> <li>-DPI requested the LHPA phone number be added to the DPI fodder messages in the newsletter.</li> <li>-The Bushfire Support Coordination Service requested advertisement in the newsletter and radio that the service is running, completely confidential and available to all.</li> </ul>	Chair	Endorsed
7	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday, 28 February 2013 at 13:30 Hrs. Chair will be Mr John Lyon.</p>	Chair	Noted

## Meeting 12

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### Key Points:

- Principals have identified fire affected students – approx. 3 to 4 families affected from each school.
- Majority of funds from the Mayors fund has been spent locally on the immediate practical needs to return families to normal such as clothing, tools and essential furniture.
- Erosion potential from lack of ground cover.
- Repair work to Coonabarabran airport has commenced.
- Local businesses are concerned about reduced trading over the Easter holiday period. Bushfire Support Coordination has experienced a very high demand since opening. Donation of 20 family vacations has been received.

### Personnel Attending:

Mr John Lyons	Chair	Present
Mr Steve O'Callaghan	NSW Rural Fire Service	Present
Mr Stuart Davies	Regional Emergency Management Officer	Present
Mr Phil Southwell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr John Lyons	Chair, Human Services Subcommittee	Present
Mr Mark Fosdick	National Parks and Wildlife Service	Present
Ms Chris White	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Ms Liz Cutts	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Catherine Wood	Barnardo's	Present
Mr Ivan Mills	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, Response and Recovery	Present

### Apologies:

Mr Steve Loane	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Apology
Mr Tony Meppem	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Apology
Mr Deborah Wilden	NSW Health	Apology
Mr Darren Vartcher	NSW Rural Fire Service	Apology
Ms Kerry Mcdermott	NSW Housing	Apology
Mr Ingo Steppat	NSW Health	Apology
Mr Bob Freebaine	NSW Department of Primary Industry	Apology
Ms Aileen Bell	Chair, Small business and Tourism Subcommittee.	Apology

No.	Agenda Item	Owner	Status
1	Meeting Opened 15:30 The chair noted the apologies.	Chair	Noted
2	Actions Arising The chair noted progress on actions arising.	Chair	Noted
	-John Lyons to summarise Mental Health Services in Warrumbungle area for Chair recommendation in final report.	BSCS	
	-John Lyons to arrange support worker training for Glennis Mangan.	BSCS	
	-Chair to approach WSC Mayor and arrange a charity groups meeting for agencies to coordinate donations.	Chair	
	-Chair to send letters of thank you to LHPA.	Chair	
	-Chair to investigate agistment subsidy using Cat C Primary Producer Grant.	Chair	Complete
	-Liz Cutts to provide a summary of allocations and monies distributed from Mayor's fund.	WSC	
	-Liz Cutts to develop an open roads and location map to attract tourists for Easter period. Liz Cutts to approach North West publication and explore potential to provide photos and reports for free promotion of area.	WSC	
	-RFS to investigate status of donated clothing received during emergency and stored on RFS property. Management of donated goods is essential, surplus donations will have to be donated to charities.	RFS	
3	Minutes from Previous Meeting Minutes approved for Meeting 11, 21 February 2013	Chair	Endorsed
4	Recovery Centre Update The Chair noted the Recovery Centre figures for the week.	Chair	Noted
5	Business Arising		
	Warrumbungle Shire Council -Chris White introduced Liz Cutts as her replacement whilst she is on leave. Liz will be running the main channels of information to the community (website and newsletter)	WSC	Noted
	Mental Health Service -Principals have identified fire affected students, approximately 3 to 4 families affected from each school. -The Teachers Federation will be extending training to non members and support staff to all schools in the area. -Tooraweenah schools to be considered for addition to the list of local schools to receive assistance.	BSCS	Noted

<p>Human Services (Charities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-All Mayor's fund recipients have distributed their \$10,000 allocation with the exception of ADRA.</li> <li>-An increased number of families are presenting however funds have already been distributed. ADRA has been funding these families through the other charities.</li> <li>-Charities will be asking for another allocation at the next Mayor's fund meeting.</li> <li>-The majority of funds have been spent locally on the immediate practical needs to return families to normal, such as clothing, tools, essential furniture.</li> <li>-Stuart Davies raised the comment that the current Mayor's fund webpage reports the total figure but not the allocations of money already spent. Liz Cutts to provide a summary of allocations and monies distributed from Mayor's fund.</li> </ul>	HS	Noted with Actions Arising
<p>National Parks and Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Environmental Subcommittee held its inaugural meeting today. A number of key issues were raised:</li> <li>-Erosion potential from a lack of ground cover.</li> <li>-Dangerous trees and the coordination of arborist services from other councils including a public consultation and training.</li> <li>-The recovery of pastures including potential weed growth and approaching companies for donation of seed.</li> <li>-Subsidy for agistment through the use of the Cat C Primary Producer Grant. Chair to investigate. RFS commented that the local mining landholders had offered free pasture to control grasses.</li> </ul>	NPWS	Noted with Actions Arising
<p>NSW Rural Fire Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Repair work at Coonabarabran airport has commenced with quotes for repairs forwarded to Council GM and Mayor.</li> <li>-RFS has approached Council to discuss fire inspection reports for development approvals. RFS to meet with Council 20 March 2013 and coordinate process toward a joint public Q&amp;A session. GM and Tony Meppem are across the issue.</li> </ul>	RFS	Noted
<p>Regional Emergency Management Officer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local businesses are concerned about reduced trading over the Easter holiday period. Feedback from the local business level is essential for the Economic Subcommittee.</li> <li>-Potential tourism attractions could be air tours of damaged areas, NPWS noted that tours are in the works and awaiting Gilgandra Council to complete repairs and open main park road.</li> <li>-Liz Cuts to develop an open roads and location map to attract tourists for Easter period. Liz to approach North West publication and explore potential to provide photos and reports for free promotion of area.</li> </ul>	REMO	Noted with Actions Arising

	<p>Human Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Bushfire Support Coordination Service has experienced a very high demand since opening.</li> <li>-A donations of twenty family vacations has been received.</li> <li>-The service phone number has been confirmed, stationary and mail drop information can be printed and distributed.</li> <li>-Negotiations with Community Health are underway to establish a stall at the weekend festival.</li> <li>-8 March 2013, Interview with the Land program will not be exclusively for the bushfire recovery and will involve a online session.</li> </ul>	BSCS	Noted
6	<p>Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-RFS to investigate status of donated clothing received during emergency and stored on RFS property. Management of donated goods is essential, surplus donations will have to be donated to charities.</li> </ul>	Chair	Noted with Actions Arising
7	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday, 7 March 2013 at 15:30 Hrs.</p>	Chair	Noted

## Meeting 13

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013

### Key Points:

- RFS has outlined the process for rectification of fire damage to properties which applies to under or uninsured cases.
- Environmental Subcommittee issues include landholder requests to clear native vegetation regrowth and leniency for mitigation purposes.
- Landfill site use has commenced.
- Mechanism for underinsured asbestos clean up has been solved including responsibility for engaging the contractor and payment.
- WorkCover has issued warnings to some asbestos contractors for the coverage of loads in transit.
- Gilgandra Council have reported that the storm event following the fires resulted in significant damage.
- The four charities who received 10k Mayors Fund allocation have used the funds widely amongst many families for purposes including rent, tools and practical goods.
- Teachers Federation held a dinner event for teachers and support staff affected by the fire.
- Recovery Centre – decline in number of intakes but new clients are turning up and applying for assistance.

### Personnel Attending:

Mr Steve Bradshaw	Chair	Present
Mr Steve Loane	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr John Lyons	Bushfire Support Coordination Service	Present
Mr Steve O'Callaghan	NSW Rural Fire Service	Present
Ms Rachel Nibbs	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services	Present
Mr Tony Meppem	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Phil Southwell	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Mark Fosdick	National Parks and Wildlife Service	Present
Ms Liz Cutts	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Ms Catherine Wood	Barnardo's	Present
Ms Glennis Mangan	Warrumbungle Shire Council	Present
Mr Ivan Mills	Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, Response and Recovery	Present

### Apologies:

Mr Darren Vartcher	NSW Rural Fire Service	Apology
Mr Deborah Wilden	NSW Health	Apology
Ms Kerry Mcdermott	NSW Housing	Apology
Mr Ingo Steppat	NSW Health	Apology
Mr Bob Freebaine	NSW Department of Primary Industry	Apology
Ms Aileen Bell	Chair, Small business and Tourism Subcommittee.	Apology



No.	Agenda Item	Owner	Status
1	Meeting Opened 15:45 The chair noted the apologies.	Chair	Noted
2	Actions Arising The chair noted progress on actions arising.	Chair	Noted
	-John Lyons to summarise Mental Health Services in Warrumbungle area for Chair recommendation in final report.	BSCS	
	-Chair to send letters of appreciation.	Chair	
	-Liz Cutts to provide a summary of allocations and monies distributed from Mayor's fund.	WSC	Complete
	-Liz Cuts to develop an open roads and location map to attract tourists for Easter period. Liz Cutts to approach North West publication and explore potential to provide photos and reports for free promotion of area.	WSC	Complete
	-RFS to investigate status of donated clothing received during emergency and stored on RFS property. Management of donated goods is essential, surplus donations will have to be donated to charities.	RFS	Complete
3	Minutes from Previous Meeting Minutes approved for Meeting 11, 21 February 2013	Chair	Endorsed
4	Business Arising		
	NSW Rural Fire Service -RFS is awaiting quotes for Coonabarabran Airport repairs. -RFS to meet with Council on 20 March 2013 regarding development approvals. -RFS is storing 6 pallets of clothing and is aware of an additional three pallets stored at Coonabarabran Rural. RFS to contact Ms Louise Sutton to ensure no local need for goods before donation to charity. -RFS has outlined the process for rectification of fire damage to properties. This only applies to under or uninsured cases. The landholder is required to provide a statement of claim including the date, time, photos and testimony of a witness. These documents will be reviewed, sent to head office and claimed against insurance. RFS is waiting for the final version of instructions suitable for public release. The Chair requested this information be disseminated in the public meeting.	RFS	Noted with actions arising.

<p>Environmental Subcommittee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The Environmental Subcommittee held a meeting via telephone on 6 March 2013.</li> <li>-Subcommittee issues include landholder requests to clear native vegetation regrowth and leniency for mitigation purposes.</li> <li>-S.Loane advised that the Central West CMA will be holding a field day on land recovery management.</li> <li>-The Environmental Subcommittee has spoken to Kevin Humpheries about claiming agistment expenses against the Category C 15k grant available to primary producers as a legitimate cost of the disaster like fodder.</li> <li>-Subcommittee to create a letter template for primary producers to attempt agistment claim through Cat C.</li> <li>-Chair and R.Nibbs to discuss issue with Emergency Management Australia.</li> <li>-MPES to investigate status of DPI Fodder assistance line.</li> </ul>	NPWS	Noted with actions arising
<p>Infrastructure Subcommittee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Landfill site use has commenced.</li> <li>-The mechanism for underinsured asbestos cleanup has been solved. Including responsibility for engaging the contractor and payment.</li> <li>-WorkCover has issued warnings to some asbestos contractors for the coverage of loads in transit.</li> <li>-Council is addressing rebuilding and fire protection, stressing that people should approach Council only, not RFS. The Mayors \$5,000 rebuild grant is in place.</li> <li>-An outreach service to those fire affected may be employed to ensure people are briefed and aware of process.</li> </ul>	WSC	Noted
<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council (Communications)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gilgandra Council have reported that the storm event following the fires resulted in significant damage. There are six points of extensive damage. Gilgandra Council would like to complete repairs by 1 April 2013.</li> <li>-Tourism promotional material including photos, road maps and information on geographical formations of the area to be promoted in media and the visitors centre. NPWS to provide aerial photos if available.</li> <li>-Liz Cutts to promote local information through multiple media groups interested in recovery of the area.</li> <li>-NPWS to provide flora and fauna regeneration information to Visitors centre.</li> </ul>	WSC	Noted with actions arising
<p>Human Services (Charities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The four charities who received 10k Mayors Fund allocation have used the funds widely amongst many families for purposes including rent, tools and practical goods.</li> <li>-At present there are no new allocations to the charity groups.</li> <li>-S.Loane stated that tied funding would be implemented allowing donators to direct donations to selected allocations.</li> </ul>	HS	Noted

	<p>Bushfire Support and Coordination Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Support information will be available in the Coonabarabran festival this weekend.</li> <li>-The remote mental health holiday packs will be distributed by schools.</li> <li>-J.Lyons will be participating on 'The Lands' media program.</li> <li>-The BSCS is receiving a number of delayed intakes.</li> <li>-S.Loane provided contact details for J.Lyons to present at the Coonabarabran festival.</li> <li>-The Teachers Federation held its dinner event for teachers and support staff. Topics discussed were; what to expect from fire affected children and self care. BSCS contact information was distributed at event.</li> <li>-A support service for Year 12 students will be coordinated through Dubbo head office.</li> </ul>	BSCS	Noted
	<p>Coonabarabran Recovery Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The recovery centre service will be running on a needs basis to assist with Council forms.</li> <li>-There has been a decline in the number of intakes, however new clients are turning up and applying for assistance.</li> <li>-S.Loane proposed the Recovery Centre service be described as 'modified' rather than closed.</li> <li>-G.Mangan thanked the committee and agencies.</li> <li>-The Chair thanked G.Mangan for her effort throughout the recovery process.</li> </ul>	WSC	Noted
	<p>Warrumbungle Shire Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Council will open its new chambers on 17 March 2013.</li> <li>-The Warrumbungle recovery remains in the forefront of people's minds and higher government is aware of the situation.</li> <li>-Tourism assistance and clean up assistance continues.</li> <li>-There will be an April meeting including a full report to Council providing a definitive account of the recovery process.</li> <li>-The Council newsletter will have one more edition.</li> </ul>	WSC	Noted
5	<p>Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Public meetings will continue for a further two weeks.</li> <li>-Recovery Committee meetings will continue for the next two weeks, then follow a monthly schedule to allow subcommittees to report progress.</li> <li>-S.Loane suggested the use of another public forum to wind down public meetings.</li> <li>-S.O'Callaghan stated that RFS will be holding a staff barbeque to allow members and their families connect with professional support staff.</li> </ul>	Chair	Noted
6	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>Thursday, 14 March 2013 at 15:30 Hrs.</p>	Chair	Noted

# Mayors Fund Bushfire Appeal

## Overview

Due to the magnitude of the Natural Disaster that swept Coonabarabran as a result of the Wambelong and Redbank Section 44 Fires in January 12-28; the Mayor established a Bushfire Appeal Fund. Donations commenced being accepted during the first week; from members of the public who wanted to assist residents who have suffered, and in many cases lost everything as a result of the fire.

The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal aims to provide a 'one stop shop' where members of the public can donate money to assist victims of the Wambelong, and the nearby Redbank fires, while ensuring that all monies donated are used solely on assisting residents who have suffered as a result of either the Wambelong or Redbank fires.

Staff from the NSW Ministry of Police and Emergency Services assisted Council in making contact with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Council undertook a risk assessment of the myriad of issues associated with managing an Appeal Fund and the Guiding Principles and Fund Rules were presented to Council for approval at the February 2013 meeting. These Fund Rules had to meet best practice fund guidelines.

Council applied for and was granted Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status on 15 January 2013, which required the preparation of a Public Fund Rules (PFR) document. Council's PFR document outlines the rules and principles that Council uses to manage the collection and distribution of funds. DGR status was granted on the basis of this document.

Some changes were suggested in Clause 3 to enable flexibility in providing funds or grants directly to bushfire victims and/or local community groups. This amended PFR was submitted to the ATO for review and approved.

Council's Guiding Principles document aims to ensure the effective administration of funds provided to partner agencies selected in Council's Public Fund Rules (Centacare, ADRA, St Vincent de Paul, Barnardos) and the partnership Projects for the Blaze Aid Project (BlazeAid, Coonabarabran Rotary and Coonabarabran Showground Trust) and NSW Department of Primary Industries Fodder Drive.

An Advisory Panel was established, with the role of overseeing and co-ordinating the distribution of funds. This Advisory Panel is chaired by the Mayor and has appropriate Council and partner agency representation. The establishment of this panel ensures that there is transparency and independent community input into the distribution of funds. An Advisory Panel Terms of Reference document was prepared and endorsed by Council.

Council's preferred distribution strategy is to distribute funds through three (3) or more phases. As there is a degree of uncertainty as to the final balance of funds that Council will receive as a result of the appeal, a phased approach allows Council to distribute funds in a timely manner and ensures that victims of the fire get the support they need as soon as possible.

The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal is a separate fund held in a Trust Account, which will accrue its own interest. Council and Partner Agencies have agreed to not charging any administration expense to this fund, and full acquittal reports must be submitted at the cessation of the account.

## Allocation of Funds

Agency Assistance Program	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Tied Donations	Phase Four	TOTAL
Home Dislocation	\$ 50,000					\$ 50,000
Roadside & Internal Fencing Materials		\$ 100,000	\$ 40,000			\$ 140,000
Home Re-establishment		\$ 210,000				\$ 210,000
Shed Rebuild		\$ 20,000				\$ 20,000
ADRA	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 26,000
Barnados	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 26,000
Centacare	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 26,000
St Vincent de Paul	\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 26,000
DPI Fodder	\$ 10,000			\$ 1,731		\$ 11,731
Potable Water	\$ 20,000					\$ 20,000
BlaizeAid Projects	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000				\$ 80,000
BlazeAid Plant Hire & Supplies					\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
Community Renewal			\$ 50,000		\$ 5,000	\$ 55,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 160,000</b>	<b>\$ 370,000</b>	<b>\$ 130,000</b>	<b>\$ 5,731</b>	<b>\$ 37,000</b>	<b>\$ 702,731</b>

# Figures of Donations to the Mayors Bushfire Appeal

## 2012/13 Financial Year

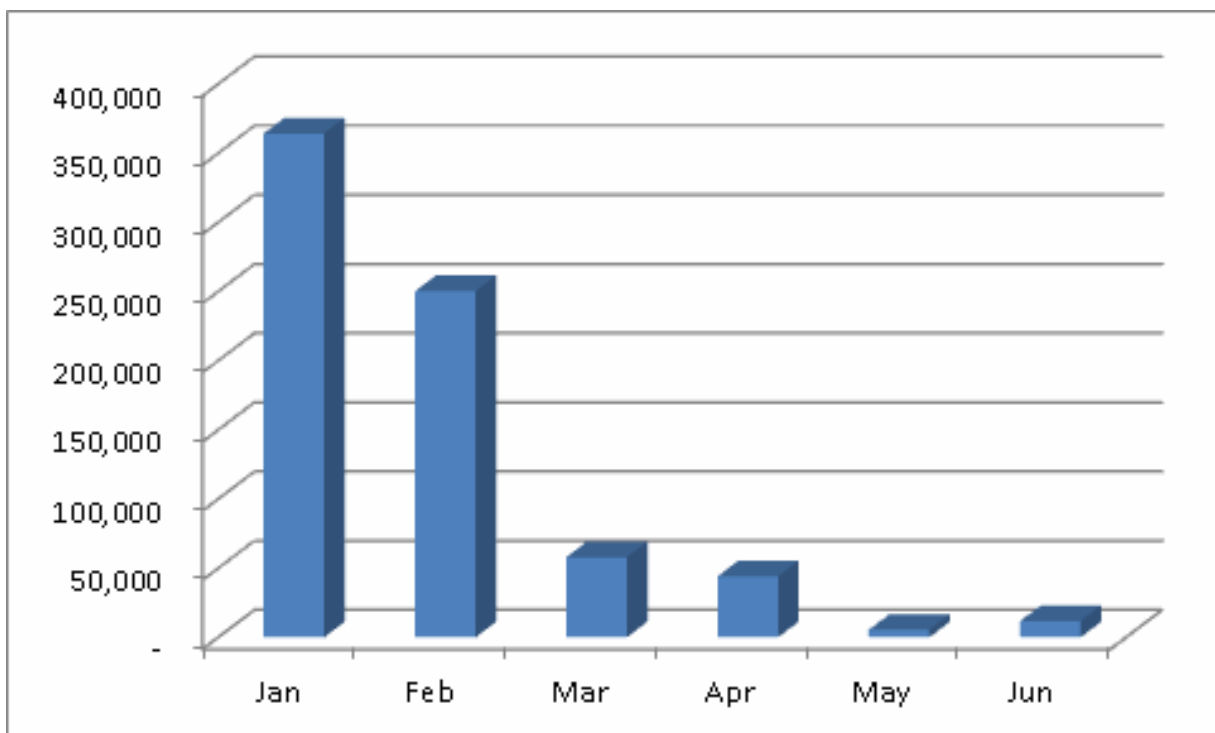
Highest Donation = \$50k

Average Donation = \$430

Median Donation = \$100

Number of Donations – Over 1,700

Donations per Month 2012/13 Financial Year



## **Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Public Fund Rules**

**Clause 1:** Warrumbungle Shire Council (WSC) has set up the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal (the Appeal) to take donations from members of the public who wish to assist residents who have suffered, and in many cases lost everything as a result of the Wambelong and Redbank fire natural disasters.

**Clause 2:** The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire appeal aims to provide a "one stop shop" where members of the public can donate money to assist victims of the Wambelong, and the nearby Redbank fires, while ensuring that all monies donated are used solely on assisting residents who have suffered as a result of either the Wambelong or Redbank fires.

**Clause 3:** All funds received will be donated to Australian charities who will manage the distribution of donated monies to victims of the two bushfires on behalf of Warrumbungle Shire Council. The funds will be distributed as such:

First \$40,000 collected to be donated to BlazeAid for work on fencing on properties damaged by the fires;

All subsequent funds donated will be distributed to the following charities:

- Centrecare
- St Vincent de Paul
- Barnardos Australia
- ADRA
- DPI Fodder Drive
- BlazeAid

**Clause 4:** All funds donated to these charities can only be used to assist victims of either the Wambelong or Redbank fire natural disaster events.

**Clause 5:** The public will be invited to contribute to the fund.

**Clause 6:** The Appeal has set up its own bank account to manage all funds received.

**Account Name:** Warrumbungle Shire Council Mayor's Bushfire Appeal

**BSB:** 062-524

**Account:** 10133579

Other means of payment allowed will include cheques, and payments at CBA branches.

**Clause 7:** Council will set up a trust fund within its general ledger and manage all funds received through this trust.

**Clause 8:** Council will not use any funds donated for any administration or other non charitable purposes, and all funds donated will only be used for the purposes as detailed in Clauses 3 and 4 above.

**Clause 9:** Council will collect monies through the fund for a period of 2 years post the complete extinguishment of the Wambelong and Redbank fires.

**Clause 10:** Funds collected will be distributed to the selected charities within two years and will be distributed on a monthly basis (per Clause 9).

**Clause 11:** If the fund is wound up or if the endorsement of the fund as a deductible gift recipient for the operation of the fund is revoked, any surplus assets of the gift fund remaining after the payment of liabilities attributable to it, shall be transferred to a fund, authority or institution to which income tax deductible gifts can be made.

**Clause 12:** The Appeal will have a gift fund that will be used to accept the donations. The gift fund operates through the separate bank account and the trust accounts set up by Council.

**Clause 13:** Reconciliations and accounts will be prepared for the Appeal on a monthly basis to ensure that all monies are correctly accounted for and used for the purposes detailed in these public fund rules, and detailed statements will be prepared when the fund is wound up.

**Clause 14:** Receipts will be issued in the name of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal.

**Clause 15:** The fund will be managed by a majority of responsible persons who will have a degree of responsibility to the general community.

**Clause 16:** The ATO will be notified of any changes to the fund rules within twenty one days.



# Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal

## Guiding Principles Document



### Rationale for the appeal

The Wambelong fire that started on 12 January in the Warrumbungle National Park has destroyed many homes and 53,000 hectares of land. The extent of the fire and the destruction in terms of loss of property, stock and destruction of wildlife is unprecedented in the area.

In order to ensure that donations will benefit the community directly, Warrumbungle Shire Council has set up a Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal and will be taking donations from members of the public who wish to assist residents who have suffered, and in many cases lost everything as a result of the fire.

The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal aims to provide a "one stop shop" where members of the public can donate money to assist victims of the Wambelong, and the nearby Redbank fires. All funds received will be allocated to locally based Partner Agencies (registered charities) who will assist Council in the distribution of gifts from the funds to victims of the fires.

### Guiding Principles

The guiding principles underpinning the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal are:

- All appeal funds will be distributed in accordance with the Public Fund Rules and the expectations of donors;
- All appeal funds will be provided to the individuals and communities affected, with priority to those who are most impacted and who have limited capacity to financially recover;
- Funds distribution will be timely, equitable and reflective of the wide diversity of individual and community needs;
- Affected communities will be able to participate in determining types of assistance provided and eligibility criteria;
- Funds will be distributed to respond to both immediate and emerging needs of individuals and communities, recognising that needs change over time;
- All management and administration costs associated with the appeal will be met by Council or Partner Agencies and not deducted from donated funds;
- All appeal processes will be transparent, well publicised and accessible. (including how the Trustee/Advisory Panel are chosen, the purpose of the fund, eligibility guidelines and methods of assessment, how the funds will be distributed and the anticipated life of the fund);
- Confidentiality will need to be maintained by all participants, particularly in regards to sharing and disclosing personal information in accordance with relevant privacy legislation;

### Eligibility Criteria

The key eligibility criteria will be that the individual seeking assistance must have been significantly affected by either the Wambelong or Redbank fires.

### Accountability and Reporting

To ensure that the guiding principles of the fund are adhered to, Council will require the following:

- Partner Agencies are to ensure that all funds are provided to victims of the fires, and that no funds are kept for administration purposes by the Partner Agency;
- Any interest earned on the funds are to be distributed to victims of the fire and can not be kept by the Partner Agency;
- Funds provided by Council to Partner Agencies will need to be managed under a separate account;
- An acquittal of how funds are used and whom funds are paid to will need to be prepared by each Partner Agency and provided to Council. Council will provide an acquittal template for use by Partner Agencies;
- Acquittals will need to include a declaration stating that all funds were used in accordance with the guiding principles and eligibility criteria above.

## Distribution Strategy

Council's preferred distribution strategy is to distribute funds through three or more phases. This approach allows Council to not overcommit when the final funds balance is unknown, and also allows Council to distribute funds in a timely manner, ensuring that victims of the fire get the support they need as soon as possible.

The initial phase of fund distribution aims to distribute an initial tranche of \$160k immediately to meet the priority needs of those most affected by the fire (i.e. those who have lost homes or primary producers significantly impacted by the fires). A breakdown of the initial distribution is detailed below:

<b>Partner Agency Receiving Funding</b>	<b>Purpose of Funding</b>	<b>Amount</b>
BlazeAid Project	Rebuilding of fencing destroyed by the fires	\$40,000
Centacare	Household Emergency / Family Support	\$10,000
ADRA	Household Emergency / Family Support	\$10,000
St Vincent de Paul	Household Emergency / Family Support	\$10,000
Barnardos	Household Emergency / Family Support	\$10,000
DPI Fodder Drive	Fodder for primary producers	\$10,000
St Vincent de Paul	Delivery of potable water to home owners or tenants whose principle place of residence has been affected by the bushfires, and whose supply of drinking water has been affected as a direct result of the fires	\$20,000
Home dislocation Payment	One off "home dislocation payment" to all households (owner occupiers or tenants) who lost their principal place of residence/sole asset.	\$50,000
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$160,000</b>

Any subsequent distribution of monies from the fund will be administered by the Advisory Committee and informed by impact assessment information (per best practice of appeal fund management and experiences from the Victorian bushfires). This will allow the Advisory Committee to assess the progress of each of Council's Partner Agencies and re-prioritise the distribution of funds as needs are recognised.

# **Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Terms of Reference**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Warrumbungle Shire Council (WSC) has set up the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal (the Appeal) to take donations from members of the public who wish to assist residents who have suffered, and in many cases lost everything as a result of the Wambelong and Redbank fire natural disasters.
- 1.2 The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire appeal aims to provide a "one stop shop" where members of the public can donate money to assist victims of the Wambelong, and the nearby Redbank fires, while ensuring that all monies donated are used solely on assisting residents who have suffered as a result of either the Wambelong or Redbank fires.
- 1.3 All funds received will be donated to Australian charities who will manage the distribution of donated monies to victims of the two bushfires on behalf of Warrumbungle Shire Council.
- 1.4 The charities (Council's Partner Agencies) that will manage the distribution of donated monies are:
- BlazeAid;
  - Centacare;
  - ADRA;
  - St Vincent de Paul;
  - Barnardos;
  - DPI Fodder Drive.

## **2. Governance**

- 2.1 The Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel (hereafter the Advisory Panel) has been set up to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of donated funds, and to direct the distribution of funds raised.
- 2.2 The Advisory Panel will also ensure that funds are used in accordance with the Guiding Principles and Public Fund Rules;

## **3. Composition**

- 3.1 The Advisory Panel will be managed by a majority of responsible persons who will have a degree of responsibility to the general community.
- 3.2 The makeup of the Panel will include representatives from each of Council's Partner Agencies:
- BlazeAid;
  - Centacare;
  - ADRA;
  - St Vincent de Paul;
  - Barnardos;
  - LHPA or DPI.
- 3.3 The position of Chairman will be filled by the Mayor;
- 3.4 The following Council officers will be on the committee: General Manager or his delegate.
- 3.5 The Advisory Panel will also include an independent community representative from the Rotary Club of Coonabarabran.

#### **4. Role and Functions**

4.1 The Advisory Panel's roles and functions include:

4.1.1 Oversight of the distribution of donated funds;

4.1.2 Decision making in regard to funding priorities (within the limits set by the Guiding Principles and Public Fund Rules);

4.1.3 Ensuring transparency and accountability in all funding decisions;

4.1.4 Ensuring appropriate community involvement in the funds distribution and decision making process;

4.1.5 Maintaining adequate records for all decisions to ensure compliance of the Appeal Fund with ATO and other reporting requirements;

#### **5. Resolutions and meetings**

5.1 The Advisory Panel will meet monthly;

5.2 The Advisory Panel will require a minimum of 5 attendees to form a quorum;

5.3 Minutes will be taken at each meeting, and will be distributed to Panel members within five working days of the meeting;

5.4 All minutes will be published in Council's business paper;

#### **6. Reporting and Accountability**

6.1 The Advisory Panel is responsible for ensuring adherence of all decisions to the requirements and principles of the Public Fund Rules and Guiding Principles documents;

6.2 Any non-adherence by a Partner Agency with these requirements and principles will be dealt with by the Advisory Panel, and will result in the cessation of further funding being directed to the Partner Agency in question;

6.3 The Advisory Panel will be responsible for ensuring that acquittals from each Partner Agency on how funds are used and whom funds are paid to are received in a timely manner;

#### **7. General Principles**

7.1 The guiding principles underpinning the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal are:

7.1.1 All appeal funds will be distributed in accordance with the Public Fund Rules and the expectations of donors;

7.1.2 All appeal funds will be provided to the individuals and communities affected, with priority to those who are most impacted and who have limited capacity to financially recover;

7.1.3 Funds distribution will be timely, equitable and reflective of the wide diversity of individual and community needs;

7.1.4 Affected communities will be able to participate in determining types of assistance provided and eligibility criteria;

7.1.5 Funds will be distributed to respond to both immediate and emerging needs of individuals and communities, recognising that needs change over time;

7.1.6 All management and administration costs associated with the appeal will be met by Council or Partner Agencies and not deducted from donated funds;

- 7.1.7 All appeal processes will be transparent, well publicised and accessible. (including how the Trustee/Advisory Panel are chosen, the purpose of the fund, eligibility guidelines and methods of assessment, how the funds will be distributed and the anticipated life of the fund);
- 7.1.8 Confidentiality will need to be maintained by all participants, particularly in regards to sharing and disclosing personal information in accordance with relevant privacy legislation;

# Minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting

Wednesday 12 February 2013

at the Community Services Meeting Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 3.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager Warrumbungle Shire Council), Cheryl Pope (NSW DPI), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid), Hugh Raadgeever (Rotary), Vicky Poyser (ADRA)

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services WSC), Stefan Murru (Chief Financial Officer WSC), Chris White (Manager Communications and IT WSC), Aaron Parker (Projects Officer WSC), Pam Welsh (NSW DPI), Jodie Burnstein (Barnardos), John Sawyer (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA), Allison Rowlands (MPES), Greg Kennedy (Catholic Church), Aileen Bell (Rotary)

**APOLOGIES:** NIL

## **PUBLIC FUND RULES**

Public Fund Rules as approved by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) presented and discussion as to suggested changes to Clause (3). This document is a requirement to being approved by the ATO for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and was submitted to the ATO on 15 January 2013. Some changes are suggested to enable flexibility in providing funds or grants directly to bushfire victims and/or local community groups.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Public Fund Rules and authorise the Mayor and General Manager to execute the document.

**H Raadgeever/L Dawson**

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Document has been used to promote the fund through the media and website, which demonstrates to Council, the community and donator's the aims and objectives of the Appeal. In essence this fund has been established to provide assistance to the victims of the Wambelong and Redbank Natural Disaster event in January 2013. This document was based on best practice principles and experiences of the Victorian Bushfires and Christchurch Earthquake Appeals. For the Administrator (Council) and Partner Agencies of the Appeal Fund there are certain governance obligations. This ensures the distribution of the monies received in good faith are meeting the emergency and emerging needs of those adversely affected by the fire in an equitable manner. Each Agency is responsible for implementing good governance, and acquittals are required to be submitted to Council on a monthly basis. Some minor description changes in Blaze Aid Project to reflect support for Volunteers at Coonabarabran Camp, in Purpose of Funding of Phase One (1) were discussed and approved. Guiding Principles detail the Phase one (1) allocation of \$160,000, providing immediate assistance to meet emergency support.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Guiding Principles

**C Pope/ C Wood**

## **ADVISORY PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Terms of Reference provides the framework and rules for panel to report ensuring transparency and accountability of decision making process. Some minor amendments were proposed and approved in regards to makeup of Panel to be decided by the Panel in future if required and general principles clause 7.1.2 to include a statement 'in the short term'.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approve the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Terms of Reference

**S Loane/C Pope**

## **APPEAL BALANCE**

The Mayor reported as at 12 February 2013 the Bushfire Appeal has received \$502,654. Additional funds continue to be received, such as the Race Meeting proceeds. Anticipated funds available for Phase two (2) is \$400,000.

## **PARTNER AGENCY REPORTS**

Each Agency provided details of funds expended from the initial \$10,000 allocation and \$20,000 Potable Water Grant. There remains funds available in at least two (2) Agencies, and the Potable Water fund has in excess of \$18,000, which is likely to be accessed as people return to damaged houses or fix water supplies. Agencies are working together to ensure referrals are made to those people seeking assistance. Explanation of the BlazeAid Project was provided which includes; contribution to BlazeAid for breakfast, lunch and fuel vouchers, Coonabarabran Rotary for catering of evening meal and Coonabarabran Showground Trust for electricity, water and rubbish collection. Clarification was sought from Rotary regarding the Coonabarabran Rotary Bushfire fund which is a separate entity.

### **1. PHASE TWO (2) DISBURSEMENTS**

Discussion re the emerging needs of bushfire affected properties and individual/personal needs. Proposal for \$370,000 to be allocated as follows;

- a) BlazeAid Project \$40,000

Supports the Volunteers based at the Coonabarabran Showground Camp who are providing labour to help rebuild fences for landholder in partnership with Coonabarabran Rotary, Coonabarabran Showground Trust and BlazeAid.

- b) Fencing Materials \$100,000

Contribution of \$1,000 per km per property of road frontage for purpose of purchasing fencing materials to replace a road-side fence destroyed by the fire. Eligibility: Landholders with stock or stock on agistment with a road-side fence destroyed by fire. Mapping of fence by RuralBiz, or similar mapping program, to accurately provide km fence materials required. Funds to be paid on presentation of invoices as a reimbursement or credit will be issued to local supplier of choice.

- c) House Re-establishment Grant \$210,000

Grant of \$5,000 per House, providing an incentive for people whose houses have been destroyed by the fire to rebuild. To fund planning such as Architectural Drawings, Engineering/Bushfire Risk Assessments or other pre requisite reports for lodgement of a Development Application.

- d) Shed Rebuild Grant \$20,000

Grant of \$1,000 per shed, providing an incentive for people whose shed(s) have been destroyed by the fire. To fund infrastructure costs such as deposit, concrete slab, connection to power.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council endorse the recommendations for the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Phase two (2) disbursements, being a total of \$390,000 provided to the following Partner Agencies or Programs; BlazeAid Project \$40,000, Fencing Materials (\$1,000 per km road frontage) \$100,000, House Re-establishment Grant (\$5,000 per house) \$210,000 and the Shed Rebuild Grant (\$1,000 per shed) \$20,000  
H Raadgeever/L Sutton

### **2. GENERAL BUSINESS**

The Mayor reported that the Governor General Australia will be visiting Coonabarabran on Monday 18 February, and will be meeting with bushfire affected residents, volunteers and government agency staff.

**NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday 13 March 2013

**MEETING CLOSED:** 4.25pm

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Thursday 7 March 2013**

**at the Community Services Meeting Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 3.00pm.**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager Warrumbungle Shire Council), Robert Freebairn (NSW DPI), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Vicky Poyser (ADRA), Karyn Cain (Centacare)

**ATTENDING:** Stefan Murru (Chief Financial Officer WSC), Liz Cutts (Acting Communications Officer WSC), Jo Wilkin (Rotary), Jodi Cormie (Coonabarabran Jockey Club), Andrew Humphries (BlazeAid), Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Coordinator WSC), Emma Gardiner (PA to Director Corporate Services WSC)

**APOLOGIES:** Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid), Cheryl Pope (DPI), Hugh Raadgever (Rotary), John Sawyer (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA)

**RECOMMENDED** that the apologies be accepted.

R Freebairn/J Wilkin

### **UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

Balance as at 7 March 2013 is \$624,000 with \$530,000 allocated in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 Programs.

### **REVIEW OF AGENCY ACQUITTALS**

All agencies submitted acquittals or a break down of accounts with an acquittal to follow. Each agency described how the funds were spent, this included items such as trailers, generators, lawnmowers as well as fuel, rent and household goods.

### **EMERGING ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Vinnies – Many residents have not accessed the potable water, \$20,000 was allocated and \$17,000 remains. The only potable water supplier available is Coona Waste.

DPI – Continuing to advertise for fodder. The LHPA have been asked to operate the fodder drive for another three (3) weeks. Rotary have donated \$3,000 to DPI for cotton seed. Until the affected area receives more rain there will be limited feed for livestock and the need for fodder donations will continue.

Disaster Recovery Centre – Residents from Timor and Tibuc Roads feel as though they are not meeting any of the funding guidelines. Either not classified as Primary Producers and therefore cannot access the Category C funding or no roadside fencing that was damaged but have internally damaged fences.

Barnardos – Many fire affected residents have not accessed any services and are trying to face it on their own with the help of neighbours. Barnardos are working with Bushfire Recovery Officer and Red Cross to offer assistance to residents where and their neighbours.

BlazeAid continue to require fencing materials. The funds allocated from the Mayors Appeal to BlazeAid are to support the volunteers and cost of the base camp and therefore is not spent on materials. Internal fencing is an emerging need, a funding strategy is to be discussed for Phase 3 at a later time, when more information regarding the emerging needs is available.

### **TIED DONATIONS**

Tied donations (donations with a specified purpose) are not specified in the Mayors Appeal Advisory Panel Terms of Reference. A proposal has been made that the Panel accept tied donations in order to facilitate donations for specific purposes.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Advisory Panel allow the Mayor's fund to accept tied donations where the purpose of the donation agrees with the requirements of the Public Fund Rules and Guiding Principles; and **FURTHERMORE** that funding accepted under tied donations be used for the purpose specified by the donor and the expenditure of such funds not require further Advisory Panel approval.

R Freebairn/ J Wilkin



**RECOVERY EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

The Panel will discuss recovery events and activities at a later date.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**COONABARABRAN JOCKEY CLUB**

Funds from the Coonabarabran Race Meeting will be donated to fire affected residents however the club is yet to decide how this will happen. They are considering other ways to issue the funds rather than donating to the Mayor's Appeal. It was noted that there was a misprint in a local newspaper which advised that the funds would be transferred to the Mayor's Appeal.

**NEXT MEETING:** To be advised.

**MEETING CLOSED:** 4.15pm

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Tuesday 9 April 2013**

**at the Warrumbungle Shire Council Training Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 10.00am.**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Vicky Poyser (ADRA), Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid)

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services ), Allison Rowlands (MPES), John Lyons (Bushfire Support Coordinator), Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Manager), Emma Gardiner (PA to Director Corporate Services)

**APOLOGIES:** Cheryl Pope (DPI), Robert Freebairn (DPI), Hugh Raadgeever (Rotary), John Sawyer (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA), Karyn Cain (Centacare)

#### **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION** That the minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting held on 7 March 2013 be accepted.

**Sutton/Dawson**

#### **UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

Balance as at 8 April 2013 is \$660,677 with \$530,000 allocated in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 Programs.

#### **SUMMARY OF ALLOCATIONS**

Council provided a break down Mayors Appeal Assistance Payments and agency allocations detailing funds allocated and expended.

Grant Program	Allocation	Funds Expended	Funds Available
Home Dislocation Grant	\$50,000	\$27,000	\$23,000
Roadside Fencing Materials Grant	\$100,000	\$15,969	\$84,431
House Re-establishment Grant	\$210,000	NIL	\$210,000
Shed Rebuild Grant	\$20,000	\$2,000	\$18,000
Centacare	\$10,000	\$10,000	Fully Expended
ADRA	\$10,000	\$10,000	Fully Expended
Barnardos	\$10,000	\$10,000	Fully Expended
St Vincent de Paul	\$10,000	\$10,000	Fully Expended
St Vincent de Paul – Potable Water	\$20,000	\$3,300	\$16,700
DPI Fodder Drive	\$10,000	\$10,000	Fully Expended
BlazeAid Project	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$40,000

It was noted that Ministry of Police and Emergency Services (MPES) have funded \$9,957 for the set up costs for the first two (2) months of the BlaizeAid camp. This included power, water, rubbish, some minor R&M to the Showground kitchen, coolroom hire and gas expenses.

The House Re-establishment Grant and Shed Rebuild Grant would be expected to take up to 12 months to be fully utilised.

The Roadside Fencing Materials Grant priority was given to livestock producers for animal welfare purposes, however with funds in this program remaining close to \$85,000 it was considered that it could better utilised by relaxing the guidelines to include lifestyle blocks and landholders who do not run livestock. This funding is retrospective, and landholders would be eligible to apply for a grant of \$1,000 per km roadside fencing (GST exclusive) upon the receipt of tax invoices.

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Roadside Fencing Materials Grant criteria be relaxed to enable landowners on lifestyle blocks or those without livestock access this program.

**Dawson/Sutton**

## REVIEW OF AGENCY AQUITTALS

The agencies then advised that the \$10,000 allocated in Phase 1 has been fully expended. There remains \$16,700 in the Potable Water Fund, which residents will be needing to access when new tanks are installed, so this fund could be realistically fully utilised.

## EMERGING ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS

Funds provided to residents through Mayor's Fund assistance payments can be classified as income by the Department of Human Services and is affecting capacity of applicants to access funding. Also requirement to provide tax invoices/receipts is very difficult for fire affected residents, due to financial hardships they are experiencing.

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal application forms for the Home Dislocation, Shed Rebuild, House Reestablishment and Roadside Fencing programs include a payment details option whereby suppliers may be paid directly.

**Wood/Loane**

BlazeAid – Expecting a drop in volunteer numbers as the weather cools down. Considering moving from the Showground as the camp would need to relocate for the duration of the North West Equestrian Expo and believe it may be easier to relocate permanently to a more comfortable location in the winter months. Council would support this move.

Residents are hesitant to sign the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) fencing agreement and wish to speak with the NPWS policy makers directly.

St Vincent de Paul – Residents are requiring fire damaged trees to be removed from their properties. BlazeAid have been assisting with this and are happy to receive agency referrals. Arborist who had offered assistance will be followed up by Council.

Barnardos – Residents presenting are requiring furniture, clothing, tools and office equipment. Barnardos are taking contact information for these clients as funds fully expended.

Recovery Centre – Lions Club are providing \$10,000 worth of vouchers worth \$500 each for residents genuinely experiencing hardship after the January bushfires. Vouchers can be redeemed at Coonabarabran businesses but cannot be spent on food, alcohol or cigarettes. Residents who have already accessed funding through any of the Agencies or Mayor's Appeal Grants are ineligible.

In general it was reported that Agencies are finding that some residents are only now in a position to seek help and are visiting them for the first time. The Agencies require funds to assist these residents.

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal allocate \$10,000 each to ADRA, Barnardos, Centacare and St Vincent de Paul in Phase 3 for household and emerging needs.

**FURTHERMORE** that the Agencies meet on a weekly to review expenditure requests.

**Loane/Dawson**

## RECOVERY EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

MPES advised recovery events were very instrumental in the recovery process after the Victorian bushfires. Events could be held on the first anniversary or during Spring when the new growth is prominent. Timing is a factor and sensitivity is critical as must be appropriate, be driven from the community and engage bushfire affected residents in a supportive environment.

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal set aside an amount of \$50,000 in Phase 3 for Community Renewal and Rejuvenation Programs to support Arts, Cultural and Community based events and gatherings focussing on renewing, healing and rebuilding the community

**FURTHERMORE** that a draft set of grant guidelines and criteria be presented to the next meeting.

**Loane/Sutton**

## GENERAL BUSINESS

### INTERNAL FENCING

BlazeAid reported that internal fencing is just as critical to landholders as roadside fencing, many people on battleaxe blocks with very small road frontage, or river access.

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal allocate an amount of \$40,000 for Internal Fencing Materials in Phase 3, with similar guidelines as that of the Roadside Fencing Assistance Grant; capped at \$2,000 per property. Eligibility criteria for this Internal Fencing Grant is dependent on the applicant;

- a) having not previously accessed the Lions Club donation of fencing materials which was provided to BlazeAid or
- b) having not previously accessed Roadside Fencing Material Grant up to the value of \$1,000.

Dawson/Sutton

**NEXT MEETING:** To be advised.

**MEETING CLOSED:** 11.20AM

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Thursday 13 June 2013**

**at the Warrumbungle Shire Council Training Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 3.00pm**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Vicky Poyser (ADRA), Carolyn Eves (Barnardos) and Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid)

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services) and Emma Gardiner (PA to Director Corporate Services)

**APOLOGIES:** Cheryl Pope (DPI), Robert Freebairn (DPI), Hugh Raadgeever (Rotary), John Sawyer (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA), Karyn Cain (Centacare), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Manager) and John Lyons (Bushfire Support Coordinator).

**CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION** That the minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting held on 9 April 2013 be accepted.

**Ryan/Loane**

**UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

Balance \$702,104, with \$667,731 allocated in either Phase 1, Phase 2 or Phase 3 Programs or Tied Donations.

**SUMMARY OF ALLOCATIONS**

Council provided a break down Mayors Appeal Assistance Payments and agency allocations detailing funds allocated and expended.

<b>Agency Assistance Program</b>	<b>Phase One</b>	<b>Phase Two</b>	<b>Phase Three</b>	<b>Tied Donations</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>Funds Remaining</b>
Home Dislocation	\$50,000				\$50,000	\$27,000	\$23,000
Roadside Fencing Materials		\$100,000			\$100,000	\$39,666	\$60,334
Internal Fencing			\$40,000		\$40,000	\$21,635	\$18,365
Home Re-establishment		\$210,000			\$210,000	\$15,000	\$195,000
Shed Rebuild		\$20,000			\$20,000	\$4,000	\$16,000
ADRA	\$10,000		\$10,000	\$1,000	\$26,000	\$21,000	NIL
Barnados	\$10,000		\$10,000	\$1,000	\$26,000	\$21,000	NIL
Centacare	\$10,000		\$10,000	\$1,000	\$26,000	\$21,000	NIL
St Vincent de Paul	\$10,000		\$10,000	\$1,000	\$26,000	\$21,000	NIL
DPI Fodder	\$10,000			\$1,731	\$11,731	\$12,482	-\$751
Potable Water	\$20,000				\$20,000	\$20,000	NIL
BlazeAid Camp	\$40,000	\$40,000			\$80,000	\$67,931	\$12,069
Community Renewal			\$50,000		\$50,000		\$50,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$160,000</b>	<b>\$370,000</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>\$5,731</b>	<b>\$697,731</b>	<b>\$291,714</b>	<b>\$406,017</b>

## REVIEW OF AGENCY AQUITTALS

ADRA, Barnardos, and St Vincent de Paul provided an update in relation to the expenditure of funds. The panel discussed the funds available in the potable water scheme and concluded that this is a long term scheme which residents will start to access when they are applying for the Home Reestablishment Grant. The time frame for the potable water scheme is two (2) years.

BlazeAid Project moved camp from the Showground to Skywatch on 23 May 2013. Catering now being provided by BlazeAid crew. Coonabarabran Rotary will return unexpended funds to Mayors Appeal when acquittal is completed. Budget will be presented next meeting as Coonabarabran Showground and PAI&H accounts are finalised for camp costs now including; skip bin, container and portaloos hire, accommodation @\$5 per day, meals @\$10 per day, fuel and incidentals, additional Council waste collection and coolroom hire.

## EMERGING ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS

### 1. Infrastructure

Many houses sustained infrastructure damage such as melted downpipes or damaged electrical cabling and while this damage is costly to repair the home remained habitable, therefore residents were not eligible for the Home Dislocation payment and sometimes limited insurance cover. Proposal for fund of \$20,000 to repair infrastructure damage to houses. Items include; underground water pipes, power and digging of trenches to reconnect to utilities.

The funds may be used for repairs to both livestock or personal infrastructure purposes, however is targeted for those people who have not lost their house. ADRA, Barnardos, Centacare and St Vincent de Paul continue to meet regularly and discuss which residents are accessing assistance and are equipped to distribute these funds.

**RECOMMENDATION** that the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal allocate \$5,000 each to the four (4) local agencies being ADRA, Barnardos, Centacare and St Vincent de Paul to issue to residents who incurred infrastructure damage at their properties.

**Loane/Dawson**

### 2. Plant Hire

At present BlazeAid do not have access to the plant equipment required to install end assemblies on fence lines. Without this equipment end assembly is a hard or sometimes impossible process and plant hire is an emerging need.

**RECOMMENDATION** that Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Panel allocate \$10,000 in Phase 4 of funding for plant hire for BlazeAid with a restriction that a local contractor is hired to complete the work.

**Loane/Sutton**

### 3. Fencing Consumables

BlazeAid have an account at local Rural Supplies for fencing consumables. The available balance on the account is \$400 which is insufficient to see out the project.

**RECOMMENDATION** that the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal allocates \$2,000 for consumables for BlazeAid being \$1,000 each for a credit account at Coonabarabran Rural Supplies and Pursehouse Rural Supplies.

**Loane/Sutton**

### 4. Soil Erosion and Weed Infestation

A new emerging issue is the siltation of dams, erosion and weed control. These issues will be continued to be monitored.

### 5. Nesting Boxes

National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) has been offered donations for a program to make nesting boxes for gliders which was reported in recent newspaper article.

**RECOMMENDATION** that the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal accept tied donations for the National Parks and Wildlife Services nesting box program.

**Loane/Poyser**

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**ARBORISTS**

Yet to hear back from the Arborist who offered assistance.

**COMMUNITY RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION PROGRAM**

Draft guidelines and application form were provided to the panel. The panel was asked to review each document and provide feedback at the next Advisory Panel Meeting.

**COMMUNITY MEETING**

Agencies invited to attend the Community Meeting held 4 July at 5pm in the Warrumbungle Shire Council Chambers.

**LIONS CLUB VOUCHERS**

Lions Club has provided a further \$10,000 worth of \$250 vouchers.

**NEXT MEETING:** To be advised.

**MEETING CLOSED:** 4.05pm

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Monday 8 July 2013**

**at the Warrumbungle Shire Council Training Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 3.00pm**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Vicky Poyser (ADRA), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid), John Sawyer (Rotary) and Pam Welsh (DPI)

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services) and Emma Gardiner (PA to Director Corporate Services),) and Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Manager)

**APOLOGIES:** Cheryl Pope (DPI), Robert Freebairn (DPI), Hugh Raadgeever (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA), Karyn Cain (Centacare) and John Lyons (Bushfire Support Coordinator)

**RECOMMENDED** that the Apologies be accepted.

**Loane/Poyser**

**CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDED** that the minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting held on 13 June 2013 be accepted.

**Poyser/Sutton**

**UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

The fund has raised \$707,546 as at Monday 8 July 2013.

Funds allocated:

Phase 1	\$160,000
Phase 2	\$370,000
Phase 3	\$130,000
Tied Donations	\$5,731
Phase 4	\$32,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$697,731</b>

Funds Available \$9,815

**SUMMARY OF ALLOCATIONS**

Council provided a break down Mayors Appeal Assistance Payments and agency allocations detailing funds allocated and expended.

<b>Agency Assistance Program</b>	<b>TOTAL ALLOCATION Phase 1, 2, 3, 4 and Tied Donations</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>Funds Remaining</b>
<b>Home Dislocation</b>	\$50,000	\$27,000	\$23,000
<b>Roadside Fencing Materials</b>	\$100,000	\$55,527	\$44,473
<b>Internal Fencing</b>	\$40,000	\$44,372	-\$4,372
<b>Home Re-establishment</b>	\$210,000	\$15,000	\$195,000
<b>Shed Rebuild</b>	\$20,000	\$6,000	\$14,000
<b>ADRA</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>Barnados</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>Centacare</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL



<b>St Vincent de Paul</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>DPI Fodder</b>	\$11,731	\$12,482	-\$751
<b>Potable Water</b>	\$20,000	\$20,000	NIL
<b>BlazeAid Project - Camp</b>	\$80,000	\$66,613	\$13,387
<b>BlazeAid - Plant Hire &amp; Materials</b>	\$12,000	\$1,000	\$11,000
<b>Community Renewal</b>	\$50,000		\$50,000
<b>Tied Donations - Other</b>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$697,731</b>	<b>\$351,994</b>	<b>\$345,737</b>

**RECOMMENDED** that for reporting purposes the funds allocated for the Roadside and Internal Fencing Programs be combined.

**Loane/Dawson**

**RECOMMENDED** that The Home Dislocation Payment and DPI Fodder Drive Programs be expired as at 31 July 2013 and advertised as such to ensure eligible families may apply for remaining funds.

**Loane/Sutton**

**RECOMMENDED** that in principle support be given to reserve the available funds left from the Home Dislocation Program allocation when expired to maintain the BlazeAid Project Camp operating costs until August 2013 and **FURTHERMORE** an amount of \$751 to be allocated to the DPI Fodder Drive allocation to enable closure of this program.

**Wood/Poyser**

#### **REVIEW OF AGENCY AQUITTALS**

ADRA, Barnardos, and St Vincent de Paul provided an update in relation to the expenditure of funds and reported that it was a quiet month for assistance requests.

#### **ROTARY**

Rotary provided their final acquittal for the BlazeAid Catering. The Panel thanked Rotary for their support.

#### **BLAZE AID**

A breakdown of the BlazeAid budget was provided to the Panel with funds remaining expected to maintain project to end of July. BlazeAid agreed and had already flagged this timeframe as an appropriate time to finish up work being the first week of August.

#### **EMERGING ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS COMMUNITY RECOVERY MEETING**

No new assistance requirements emerged at the Community Recovery Meeting held Thursday 4 July 2013.

#### **COMMUNITY RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION PROGRAM**

Draft guidelines and the application form were reviewed and the panel provided feedback. The first sentence of the guidelines was amended and now reads: The Community Renewal and Rejuvenation Program aims to support community based events such as arts, cultural and social gatherings that provides an opportunity for renewing, healing and rebuilding the community.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Community Renewal and Rejuvenation Program Guidelines and Application Form be accepted.

**Loane/Wood**

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**BLAZE AID FAREWELL FUNCTION**

BlazeAid would like to hold a function before they leave in August. Invitees would include volunteers and the fire affected community.

**ROB GORDON RECOVERY PRESENTATION**

Rob Gordon is a clinical psychologist who speaks about the recovery process after a disaster. Rob has spoken after events such as the Bali bombings, Tasmania Bushfires and Christchurch Earthquake. Six (6) months on from the bushfire the focus of recovery is changing with the departure of BlazeAid and the ceasing of the Bushfire Support Coordinator Service in mid/late August. The cost of the recovery presentation is estimated at \$10,000 half of which will be funded by other agencies. The date of the presentation is yet to be finalised.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal allocate \$5,000 to Barnardos for the Rob Gordon Recovery Presentation.

**Shinton/Poyser**

**NEXT MEETING:** To be advised.

**MEETING CLOSED:** 4.05pm

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Tuesday 13 August 2013**

**at the Warrumbungle Shire Council Training Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 3.00pm**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul), Vicky Poyser (ADRA), Catherine Wood (Barnardos), Pam Welsh (DPI) and Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid)

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services) and Emma Gardiner (PA to Director Corporate Services), Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Manager), John Lyons (Bushfire Support Coordinator) and Allison Rowlands (MPES)

**APOLOGIES:** Cheryl Pope (DPI), Robert Freebairn (DPI), Hugh Raadgever (Rotary), Maureen Hunt (ADRA), Karyn Cain (Centacare) and John Sawyer (Rotary)

**RECOMMENDED** that the Apologies be accepted.

**Loane/Dawson**

#### **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDED** that the minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting held on 8 July 2013 be accepted.

**Sutton/Poyser**

#### **UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

The fund has raised \$727,503 as at Tuesday 13 August 2013

Funds allocated:

Phase 1	\$160,000
Phase 2	\$370,000
Phase 3	\$130,000
Tied Donations	\$5,731
Phase 4	\$37,000
TOTAL	\$702,731

Funds Available \$24,772

#### **SUMMARY OF ALLOCATIONS**

Council provided a break down Mayors Appeal Assistance Payments and agency allocations detailing funds allocated and expended.

<b>Agency Assistance Program</b>	<b>Total Allocation</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>Funds Remaining / (Over Allocation)</b>
<b>Home Dislocation</b>	\$50,000	\$29,000	\$21,000
<b>Roadside and Internal Fencing</b>	\$140,000	\$111,138	\$28,862
<b>Home Re-establishment</b>	\$210,000	\$20,000	\$190,000
<b>Shed Rebuild</b>	\$20,000	\$8,000	\$12,000
<b>ADRA</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>Barnados</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>Centacare</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>St Vincent de Paul</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	NIL
<b>DPI Fodder</b>	\$11,731	\$12,482	(751)L

<b>Potable Water</b>	\$20,000	\$20,000	NIL
<b>BlazeAid Project - Camp</b>	\$80,000	\$93,228	(\$13,228)
<b>BlazeAid - Plant Hire &amp; Materials</b>	\$12,000	\$12,003	(\$3)
<b>Community Renewal</b>	\$55,000	\$5,000	\$50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$702,731</b>	<b>\$394,851</b>	<b>\$307,880</b>

### **CLOSURE OF HOME DISLOCATION AND DPI FODDER DRIVE**

The Home Dislocation and DPI Fodder Drive programs closed on 31 July 2013, the closure was advertised in local newspapers and diaries as well as on Council's website. The Disaster Recovery Manager and Bushfire Support Coordinator contacted those residents who were yet to submit applications for the Home Dislocation payment and are expecting to receive two (2) additional applications.

### **REVIEW OF AGENCY ACQUITTALS AND REPORTS**

ADRA, Barnardos, and St Vincent de Paul provided an update in relation to the expenditure of funds.

The Panel requested that when applications for potable water are received the applicants are asked if the water will be for an existing house or a rebuild. This will not affect the applicant receiving the potable water but will assist the Panel in finding out how the community is getting on.

An invoice from Pursehouse Rural for fencing materials remains outstanding; however credit facility for \$1,000 as per Phase (4) allocation has been accessed and will be required.

BlazeAid Statistics as at 4 August 2013

- Total volunteer: 586
- Volunteer days: 6738
- Properties worked on: 80
- Fencelines cleared: 230.4 km
- Fencelines built: 188.5 km

Laurie Dawson will prepare a report for Warrumbungle Shire Council on the BlazeAid project. Laurie spoke about how he and the many volunteers have enjoyed their time in the Warrumbungle Shire and thanked Council for the recent Freedom of the Shire Award.

**RECOMMENDED** that reports provided by the ADRA, Barnardos, BlazeAid and St Vincent de Paul be accepted.

**Loane/Sutton**

### **EMERGING ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **WEED CONTROL**

A small number of property owners have requested funds for weed control. The Mayor's Appeal is not the best avenue for funding for weed control, instead Council will write to NSW Primary Industries Minister Hodgkinson (MP) to highlight the issues facing by property owners after the bushfire.

#### **ROB GORDON PRESENTATION**

Rob Gordon will arrive in Coonabarabran at midday on 19 September and will make two (2) presentations. Mr Gordon will meet with the Mayor and General Manager, time yet to be finalised.

The first presentation is for those people who worked on the front line during the bushfire (Council staff included). This session will commence at 2.30pm and an estimated 30 front line staff will attend.

The second presentation is open to the community and will commence at 6.30pm, Barnardos are using their channels to contact and invite community members who were affected by the bushfire. Estimated 80 members of the community to attend.

The presentation to frontline staff could be held in the Council Chambers with the community session proposed to be held at St Lawrence's School Hall.

### **COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM**

An application was received from Badhii Aboriginal Grandmothers Group for \$5,000 for a community garden, court support, Christian rally and an arts and craft centre. The Panel was provided a rating sheet to assist them in assessing the application with a decision pending the next meeting.

### **GENERAL BUSINESS**

#### **RAILWAY IRON**

BlazeAid received a donation of railway iron from John Holland and have organised for Bob Fenwick to deliver the material to Coonabarabran. BlazeAid are yet to receive the invoice for the delivery however it may be in the vicinity of \$5,000. John Holland have an additional 40 tonnes of railway iron available at a cost of \$600 per tonne.

#### **HENLEYS RURAL SUPPLIES**

Approximately \$1,000 credit remaining on the account at Henley's Rural Supplies. Bob Fenwick is continuing to help land owners with repairs to their property and will be required to draw on this account.

#### **PLASTIC FENCING POSTS**

Fire affected land holders can continue to access fire resistant plastic posts through Pursehouse Rural. The posts were donated by a company called Australia Composite Technology.

#### **DONATION FROM COOLAH LIONS CLUB**

Coolah Lions Club have generously donated approximately 60 wash baskets filled with non-perishable food and goods.

**RECOMMENDED** that Barnardos store the wash baskets at their Coonabarabran office and the four (4) partner agencies work together to distribute to those affected by the bushfire.

**Sutton/Poyser**

#### **FINAL MEETING**

This meeting is the final meeting that both Laurie Dawson (BlazeAid Coordinator) and John Lyons (Bushfire Support Coordinator) will be attending as their projects have now come to an end. Allison Rowlands offered congratulations and appreciation to the Panel and the Mayors Bushfire Appeal which has facilitated much good will and support for bushfire affected residents which added a terrific element to the Bushfire Support Coordinator role.

#### **RURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM**

Sue Freebairn will commence as the DPI Rural Support Person in September. Sue will provide financial counseling and will work out of the LHPA office.

**NEXT MEETING:** To be advised.

**MEETING CLOSED:** 4.00pm

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**

**Friday 17 January 2014**

**at the Warrumbungle Shire Council Meeting Room, Coonabarabran commencing at 9.00am**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Peter Shinton (Chairperson), Steve Loane (General Manager), Lois Sutton (St Vincent de Paul). Carolyn Eves (Barnardos), Sue Freebairn (DPI), John Sawyer (Rotary), Bob Fenwicke (BlazeAid) and Vicki Poyser (ADRA).

**APOLOGIES:** Cheryl Pope (DPI), Catherine Wood (Barnardos).

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Ryan (Director Corporate Services), Glennis Mangan (Disaster Recovery Manager)

**RECOMMENDED** that the apologies be accepted.

**Loane / Freebairn**

#### **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDED** that the minutes of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal Advisory Panel Meeting held on 13 August 2013 be accepted.

**Loane / Freebairn**

#### **UPDATE ON FUND STATUS**

The fund has raised \$819,523 as at Monday 13 January 2014

Funds allocated:

Phase 1	\$ 160,000
Phase 2	\$ 370,000
Phase 3	\$ 130,000
Tied Donations	\$ 75,981
Phase 4	\$ 37,000
Phase 5	\$ 8,508
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 781,489</b>

Allocated Funds Not Expended	\$ 309,173
<u>Unallocated Funds</u>	<u>\$ 38,034</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 347,207</b>

#### **SUMMARY OF ALLOCATIONS**

Council provided a break down Mayors Appeal Assistance Payments and agency allocations detailing funds allocated and expended.

<b>Agency Assistance Program</b>	<b>Total Allocation</b>	<b>Amount Expended</b>	<b>Funds Remaining</b>
<b>Home Dislocation</b>	\$30,000	\$30,000	-
<b>Roadside and Internal Fencing</b>	\$140,000	\$119,875	\$20,125
<b>Home Re-establishment</b>	\$210,000	\$30,000	\$180,000
<b>Shed Rebuild</b>	\$20,000	\$11,000	\$9,000
<b>ADRA</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	-
<b>Barnados</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	-
<b>Centacare</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	-
<b>St Vincent de Paul</b>	\$26,000	\$26,000	-

<b>DPI Fodder</b>	\$12,482	\$12,482	-
<b>Potable Water</b>	\$20,000	\$20,000	-
<b>BlazeAid Project - Camp</b>	\$101,641	\$101,641	-
<b>BlazeAid - Plant Hire &amp; Materials</b>	\$18,116	\$18,116	-
<b>Bird Boxes</b>	\$250	\$250	-
<b>Community Renewal</b>	\$55,000	\$10,000	\$45,000
<b>Restart NSW Gov</b>	\$70,000	\$14,952	\$55,048
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$781,489</b>	<b>\$472,316</b>	<b>\$309,173</b>

A net adjustment of \$8,508 to close the Home Dislocation, BlazeAid Camp and Materials/Plant Hire Project and DPI Fodder Programs required.

**RECOMMENDED** that the following adjustments and allocations be made that will close the following Programs; Home Dislocation -\$30,000, BlazeAid Camp +\$21,641, BlazeAid Materials/Plant Hire +\$6,116 and DPI Fodder +\$751; being a net allocation of \$8,508 for Phase 5.

**Poyser/Freebairn**

#### **COMMUNITY RENEWAL AND REJUVEATION PROGRAM**

Two applications have been submitted and assessed against the funding criteria guidelines; the Badhii Grandmothers Group Inc for \$5,000 for a Community Garden, Court Support, a Christian Rally and Arts and Craft activities, held over from August 2013 meeting and the Coonabarabran Rotary Club for \$5,000 for a Celebration One Year On BBQ.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Warrumbungle Shire Mayors Bushfire Appeal endorse the Mayor and General Manager approving the \$5,000 for the Celebration One Year from the Community Renewal and Rejuvenation Program.

**Loane / Sutton**

**RECOMMENDED** that the Badhii Grandmothers Group Inc application of \$5,000 for a Community Garden, Court Support, a Christian Rally and Arts and Craft activities be declined.

**By consensus**

#### **REVIEW OF AGENCY ACQUITTALS AND REPORTS**

ADRA: \$1,200 remains available in Emergency Assistance fund.

St Vincent de Paul: There remains \$15,325 in the Potable Water Fund, however because there has been no rain the first loads have run out and requests have been made for second. \$1,321 remains in Emergency Assistance fund.

Barnardos and Centacare to provide acquittals.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Potable Water Program guidelines be relaxed to make permissible a second load of water.

**Sutton / Poyser**

## **EMERGING ISSUES**

- Mental Health remains a big issue: DPI to raise matter with Salvation Army who will make area home visits.
- Fodder shortages and Noxious weeds infestations are being compounded by drought which is hampering the recovery process.
- Some families in a very bad way with fencing – very remote, hilly and difficult country to re-fence and is not suitable for BlazeAid Volunteers, some of whom have been returning and assisting individuals.
- National Parks are providing materials for 47 neighbours of which only 14 Agreements have been signed off. In some cases areas of intractable country is being fenced off.
- Options for support by Salvation Army officers at Coonabarabran Show in RFS tent.

## **BLAZE AID**

BlazeAid are having a reunion at the Coonabarabran Racecourse for the Coonabarabran Show. Are assisting the PAI&H with the preparation and clean up for the Show. A dinner will be held on the Sunday, and PAI&H are providing free tickets to Show for BlazeAid Volunteers. Proposal and options for Mayors Appeal to support bushfire affected residents or whole community for a day at the Coonabarabran Show to be discussed by PAI&H.

## **COONABARABRAN ROTARY**

BBQ held on the 13 January at the Coonabarabran Racecourse was very successful, with Rotary catering for 330 people for dinner. Feedback has been very positive. Refund provided back to Mayors Appeal of \$1,490 unspent funds.

**NEXT MEETING:** Late February

**MEETING CLOSED:** 10.15 am

.....  
**CHAIRPERSON**



# Agency Reports

# Mayors Report on the Wambelong Fire

## SUNDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2012

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> January at approximately 11am I received a message from FCO Gary Wilson that a Section 44 had been declared for a fire in the Warrumbungle National Park. I visited the Fire Control Centre at 1pm. By 3pm the fire storm was clearly visible. By 7pm we had a thunderstorm where leaves and twigs were falling with the rain.

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January in company with acting Deputy Commissioner of RFS John Parnaby I travelled through fire ground up Timor Road, then Siding Spring Observatory, Tibuc Road, Morrisseys Road then Guinema Road until stopped by active fire and falling trees then back to Coonabarabran through Bugaldie; fallen burning trees and downed power lines everywhere.

We counted 33 houses destroyed and around 50 sheds and outbuildings lost on the areas we could visit.

Jan 15; met with Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner, Shaen Fitzsimmons and Kevin Humphries. Set up Mayors fund; Talks to set up recovery centre.

Jan16; met with Mike Gallacher – Minister for Emergency Services.

Jan 17: met with Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Matt Thistlethwaite. Toured the fire ground met with RFS Staff and Fire affected residents of Timor Road and Bugaldie area.

Jan 18; met with Robin Parker – Minister for NPWS, tour of Warrumbungle NP

Jan 21; met with Anne Jones and Barbra Andrews – Lions to discuss their planned donations to victims of the fire.

Jan 24; toured fire ground with General Manager and MPES staff

Feb 7; Julie and I start to organize itinerary for Governor General visit and submit to Canberra.

Feb 18; Governor General visits, lunch with fire victims, fire fighters and volunteers at Bowling Club, then visited Siding Spring Observatory met with observatory staff then moved to lookout where she meet the National Parks & Wildlife staff, then afternoon tea with the Blaze Aid volunteers on the roadside along Timor Road, then to Coonabarabran VRA HO to meet volunteers and Council staff then dinner with the Blaze Aid team.

Feb 23; met and escorted Barry O'Farrell and Kevin Humphries through the fire ground.

Mar 17; Governor visits, morning tea with Lill family toured the affected stud complex, lunch at the Coonabarabran Town Hall with the Senior Citizens and Blaze Aid volunteers, then to Siding Spring to meet with Observatory Staff and National Parks and Wildlife staff, afternoon tea was at the Warrumbungle Motel with the fire victims

During the period January 14 - February 26 I did 35 TV interviews, 53 radio interviews and 21 newspaper interviews, Julie 2 radio interviews and numerous well wishes and volunteer offers.

February to June:

TV: Prime 7 Sydney  
Win 9 Sydney  
ABC  
Sky News  
NI TV  
Win Capital  
Prime Tamworth  
Prime Orange  
Win Dubbo

Radio: 2DU  
2TM  
ABC Dubbo  
ABC Newcastle  
ABC Sydney  
2SM  
2GB  
2UE  
WAR FM  
ABC News Radio  
ABC 702  
ABC Evening Radio  
Central Coast Star 104.5

Newspapers:  
AAP Reuters  
Sydney Morning Herald  
Telegraph  
Gunnedah Independent  
Tamworth Northern Daily Leader  
Dubbo Daily Liberal  
Moree Champion  
Narrabri Courier  
Coonamble Times  
Mudgee Guardian  
Sun Herald  
Coonabarabran Times

## Coonabarabran Disaster Recovery Centre

Following the Black Sunday fires in January 2013, the Coonabarabran Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) was established on January 18 under the guidance of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services and the Warrumbungle Shire Council. The Centre was housed in the Coonabarabran Town Hall which was temporarily constructed with individual “partitions” to provide as much privacy and confidentiality as possible. The Centre commenced with all Agencies on board and they included:

- Red Cross
- Disaster Welfare Services (MPES)
- Mental Health
- Emergency Housing
- DPI
- LHPA
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- Centrelink
- Insurance Council
- Legal Aid
- ATO
- Banking and Financial Corporations
- RAA
- Chaplaincy
- ADRA

The Disaster Recovery Centre was initially managed jointly by Mrs Sally Morris and Mrs Glennis Mangan of the Warrumbungle Shire Council. Sally and Glennis were assisted by two part time administration officers, Tara Whalan and Sandra Durant.

From day one the Recovery Centre was a safe house for those fire affected residents and all media was forbidden from entry. The residents were asked to register at the Centre where they were then triaged by Red Cross and escorted to the relevant Agencies for assistance with emergency housing, Centrelink processing or legal aid and financial assistance. All efforts were made to ensure the residents were looked after with as minimal red tape as possible to help alleviate some of the burden and heartache felt by all.

A data base was immediately established with all visits to the Centre recorded and information from the resident taken to allow as much future assistance as possible. An intake form was commenced by Red Cross for each person/family and then passed to each of the agencies to complete and sign. This information was then recorded into the various data bases. All information remains confidential.

Various other data bases were established to record the services required or needed by residents with all contact details listed; such as - SES for tree removal, Essential Energy, Telstra, water cartage, donated goods and services, fodder, counselling services to name a few. The DRC Managers were then able to follow up and get the assistance to the residents as quickly as possible.

Daily and Weekly Agency meetings/debriefs were held (with minutes recorded) to discuss any emerging trends and any State or Federal help being provided.

BlazeAid arrived almost immediately and commenced the huge task of removing and reconstructing the hundreds of kilometres of burnt and destroyed fencing. This group of volunteers were amazing, not only providing the man power to carry out the fencing but also becoming a “friend” and an “ear” to all those in need.

The Mayoral Appeal was launched and donations from all over the country started pouring in. A panel was convened with the help and guidance from MPES and funds were allocated to help in various ways. Including; fencing, home dislocation, water, emergency needs, house rebuilds and shed rebuilds. Barnados, St Vincent DePaul, ADRA and CentreCare became the Agencies who looked after allocated funds for infrastructure damage and emergency needs.

An Asbestos Management Plan was established and the massive waste clean up began. This was coordinated by Council's Acting Project Manager, Aaron Parker. Aaron was able to pull this all together in a professional and efficient way.

Glennis Mangan became the full time Manager of the Centre and continued to oversee its operation. Residents began to apply for assistance through the Mayoral fund and Glennis and Tara were available to help with the completion of all application forms.

The Centre was relocated to the main administration building of the Shire Council in John Street on the 18 February. The hours of operation initially were 10 hours a day, 7 days a week, with a reduction in the hours in February to 9.00am to 5.00pm Mon-Fri. With the relocation the hours of operation were reduced again to 9.00am to 4.30pm.

A regular newsletter was produced containing all updated information on the Recovery Centre, the Mayoral Fund Appeal, BlazeAid assistance and Bushfire Support. As well as the newsletters, public meetings were held, initially weekly, then moving to monthly. The final public meeting was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013.

In March the Bushfire Support Coordinator, John Lyons, of MPES, commenced duties at the Disaster Recovery Centre. John was able to make home visits to people who were in need of advice and direction. He was able to assist with decision making and action plans, making referrals and applications and facilitating meetings between residents and agencies.

The generosity of people from all over the country was amazing and very soon after the fire donated goods began arriving. These goods were distributed where possible to the appropriate agency or directly to the bushfire affected residents. Beautiful hand made quilts from all over the world were donated and still to this day keep arriving. Lions International and Coonabarabran Lions made an astounding donation of \$20,000 in \$500 and \$10,000 in \$250 vouchers for residents and these vouchers could be spent at any Coonabarabran Business. Lions in Coolah are donating 30 baskets of non-perishable items to the value of \$7,000.

John Lyons and Glennis Mangan continue operating the DRC. However the Bushfire Support will cease on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August. The Centre will remain available on a part time basis with the Warrumbungle Shire Council keen to continue while ever the community have the need or the Mayoral Fund Appeal is financial.



# Coonabarabran Bowling Club

Edwards Street, Coonabarabran NSW 2357  
PO Box 288, Coonabarabran NSW 2357

Bar: 02 6842 1349  
Fax: 02 6842 2371

Office: 02 6842 1344

Email: [co55792@bigpond.net.au](mailto:co55792@bigpond.net.au)

## COONABARABRAN BOWLING CLUB BUSHFIRE ASSISTANCE EFFORT

On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> January a small bushfire that was burning in the Warrumbungle National Park, some 40kms from Coonabarabran, got out of control and turned into a major blaze. A call was received at the Club from the Rural Fire Services seeking permission to use the Club as the emergency evacuation centre. The Manager was contacted and granted permission for this to happen.

The next few hours saw the Club spring into action as over 100 evacuees came into the Club to register. The staff set up tea, coffee and soft drinks for these people as well as looking after the pets that they had brought with them.

As it was getting late in the afternoon extra staff were brought in to prepare and cook meals for a lot of these people. The Manager kept the Club open all night to look after any late evacuees who came in to register. The Government agencies involved are to be congratulated as they found accommodation for those that needed it and all within a few hours.

The Club has catered for these people, with breakfast, lunch and dinner being served for the next 10 days. Room was found for support agencies to set up for the next 4 days until a disaster recovery centre was established in the shire hall. The Club looked after these agencies providing administration services such as emailing, faxing, photo copying and phone answering.

Facilities were made available at the Club to conduct daily lunch time meetings to keep the evacuees and the community updated on the progress of the fire and relief efforts. Up to 200 people attended these meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are still happening on a weekly basis, some 5 weeks later.

The Club cancelled some of their social activities, such as Bingo, to facilitate the emergency evacuation and relief efforts. Our members are very understanding and willing to support their neighbours in times of need.

Some of the evacuated people had never been into the Club before and were very impressed with the relaxed atmosphere created and the attention given to them by the staff. We have had many people compliment management on the friendly staff and the way they were cared for. These people were pleased to have a place that they could go to and feel comfortable, relax and talk to their friends and neighbours. This is what Clubs like ours are all about.



**Robert Freebairn OAM  
(WDA, HDRE)  
Agricultural Consultant  
Agricultural Journalist**

39 Cassilis Street  
PO Box 316  
Coonabarabran NSW 2380

**p** +61 2 6842 1196

**f** +61 2 6842 5994

**e** [robert.freebairn@bigpond.com](mailto:robert.freebairn@bigpond.com)

ABN 39 498 782 481

Cheryl Pope  
Leader Rural Support Program  
Orange Agricultural Institute  
Dept of Primary Industry  
Locked Bag 6006  
ORANGE NSW 2800

ph 02 6391 3948  
fax 02 6391 3922  
mobile 0428

Dear Cheryl,

### **Re Pasture recovery Coonabarabran after January Bushfire**

Most pastures have recovered well after the 2013 Warrumbungle bush fires. History has shown this mainly to be the case although recovery can be slower in high intensity fires where ground-cover levels prior to the fire were high and fire impact major.

#### **Prior to the fire**

Seasonal conditions had mainly been relatively dry from mid-August 2012 and up to and or well after the fire (especially dry post fire for some time in the north west corner of the fire area).

While not in all cases pastures had been relatively well eaten down prior to the fire because of these drier conditions. As a consequence fire intensity and duration in a given pasture situation was commonly relatively fast with extreme heat of moderate to short duration.

In some paddocks not grazed to any great degree in the spring and summer up to the fire and where groundcover levels were high heat and intensity of the fire were more severe. Recovery from such pastures was slower although final recovery is expected to be good.

#### **Ground cover loss**

Paddocks with good levels of groundcover prior to the fire lost considerable amounts of dry feed because of it. Typically groundcover levels of these fires was 1500 – 3000 kg/ha.

Dry paddock feed prior to the fire was of declining feed value but an important source of animal fodder. It was largely because of this loss that DPI and LHPA coordinated and administered the Fodder Hot line and associated donations of fodder to fire affected farmers.

In a general sense many farmers have acknowledged such donated fodder compensated for their lost paddock fodder reserves. Many farmers via friends and relatives also received significant donated fodder and agistment.

## **Pasture recovery**

Many pastures are resilient and will and did recover well when good soil moisture conditions returned. Some pastures did not adequately respond until cooler conditions combined with good soil moisture occurred.

Native summer growing perennial grasses, the vast majority of many pasture types in this bushfire, generally survive well even after severe bushfires. Regrowth time and rate is largely dependent on soil moisture as well as severity of the burn.

For example land burnt in the Warrumbungle fire was commonly providing cattle feed a month post fire where reasonable rains had occurred (generally not in the north west corner). Areas where rain fell began to green up within a week of the fire.

Introduced subtropical perennial grasses also generally are able to survive bushfire and can quickly recover when soil moisture is restored. As with native perennial grasses well managed ones tend to have greater root reserves and recover faster and with less plant losses. This was generally the case after the Warrumbungle fire.

Temperate perennials like phalaris (not a major pasture of the area but present in some paddocks) are generally dormant or semi dormant at the time of a summer bush fire, especially if a dry period has preceded the fire. Often they recover well, especially if stands have been well established and well managed. However recovery is often not until autumn when conditions are cooler.

Lucerne also generally has a good track record for recovery after fire, especially if stands are strong. Soil moisture affects recovery time and rate.

Winter annual legumes species like sub clover serradella naturalised and introduced medics tend to recover in the autumn break provided seed set in previous seasons has been adequate. Recovery is also to a large degree dependant on hard seed content of a given variety as well as volume of seed dormant in the soil seed bank. While some seed is destroyed by fire generally a good percentage survives.

As a general rule recovery of winter annual legumes has been good.

Annual grasses like rye grass can suffer major seed loss although commonly reasonable quantities are buried in the plant litter and can germinate after the autumn break. The same applies to many annual grasses like brome and barley grass.

Again recovery of these species seems to have generally been good.

## **Lack of ground cover post fire**

Lack of ground cover for crops and pastures can be an issue following fire, especially with hard setting soils and on sloping land. Where applicable (e.g. arable areas and in soil that can be adequately penetrated) a tillage, often with tillage lines spaced, along contour lines can help reduce rapid run off and improve soil moisture absorption until ground cover builds up.

In some cases soil erosion was a problem post fire following storm events and lack of groundcover.

## **Weeds**

Where pastures have low levels of summer active pasture species, common after cropping phases or where constantly overgrazed and where no perennial pasture has been established, or is still immature, weeds are commonly a major issue after bush fires followed by good summer rain events. Bathurst burrs, catheads, fleabane are just a few examples.

The best approach to controlling these weeds is to manage pastures (native or introduced) to encourage their building up of the density of perennial grasses.

Winter weeds following the fire are generally little different than normal. Strategies to control them are in line with normal control strategies.

New weed issues post fire can be a consequence of donated fodder with weed seeds present in it. It is important for farmers to monitor and control new outbreaks of weeds.



## **Post fire strategy**

Following fires it is a good opportunity to not only assess the impact of the fire but how to overall ensure the pasture will be more productive and nutritious, as well as long term resilient. Pastures post fire, drought or just coping with normal seasonal variation will be far more productive if the right mix of species is included, they are well established, soil nutrient deficiencies are addressed and if well managed.

## **Post fire pasture management**

While strategies for post fire pasture management are similar to normal pasture management, now may be a good time to consider holding a seminar re pasture management for farmers affected by the fire. It may be a good way to offer a positive way forward.

Issues for such a seminar could include

- Long term fire impact on pastures
- Soil nutrition aspects
- Managing native pastures
- Establishing and establishing subtropical pastures
- Lucerne pastures
- The best legumes as a component of native and introduced pastures
- Grazing management for production and persistence (native and introduced)
- When and how to use supplements to best effect
- Winter grazing and dual purpose crops, getting them reliable and productive
- Effective fencing and water. Strategies to minimise costs.

I would be happy to be part of such a seminar (in a professional consultant role). Others could include district agronomists, livestock officers (Brett Littler is very good), agribusiness agronomists. Maybe a financial advisor re financial assistance available for development programs.

Maybe a local committee of fire affected farmers could consider these as well as other options for a seminar and be responsible for its direction.

Trust these comments are of assistance

Yours sincerely

Robert Freebairn

# Recovery Co-ordinators Summary Report

## Warrumbungle Bushfire - January 2013

Mr Steve Bradshaw APM

## Table of Contents

1. The Event .....	124
<i>Background</i> .....	124
<i>Natural Disaster Declarations</i> .....	124
<i>NSW Natural Disaster Assistance Arrangements</i> .....	124
2. Regional Overview .....	124
3. Recovery Structure .....	124
<i>Regional Recovery Coordinator</i> .....	124
4. Recovery Centre .....	125
<i>Coonabarabran Recovery Centre</i> .....	125
<i>Outreach Meetings</i> .....	125
<i>Communication Strategy</i> .....	126
5. Impacts .....	126
<i>Human Services</i> .....	126
Safety & Wellbeing .....	126
Health .....	126
Welfare .....	126
Asbestos Cleanup and Disposal .....	127
General Waste Cleanup and Disposal .....	128
Public Infrastructure, Roads, Bridges & Culverts .....	128
<i>Small Business and Tourism</i> .....	128
Businesses .....	128
Tourism .....	129
<i>Environment</i> .....	129
6. Summary and Observations .....	129
<i>General</i> .....	129
Local Government .....	129
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	130
Recommendation 1: RFS Asbestos assessment. ....	130
Recommendation 2: Friable Asbestos Removal. ....	130
Recommendation 3: Fodder Distribution .....	130
Recommendation 4: Emergency Management Training for Council Staff. ....	130

Recommendation 5: Mitigation (National Parks and Wildlife Hazard Reduction).....	130
Recommendation 6: Australia Post.....	131
Recommendation 7: Recovery Plan .....	131
Recommendation 8: Recovery Sub Committees .....	131
Recommendation 9: The Disaster Victim Registration (DVR) .....	131
Recommendation 10: The Mayors Appeal.....	132
Recommendation 11: Federal Government / State Government Grants: .....	132
Recommendation 12: Sharing of Operational "Welfare" based information between "State" and "Federal" government agencies:.....	133
Recommendation 13: Combat Agencies and Recovery.....	133

# 1. The Event

## Background

Between 4 and 19 January 2013, numerous bushfires occurred across NSW, exacerbated by persistent and unprecedented fire danger conditions, which affected much of south-eastern Australia. The Wambelong fire started within the Warrumbungle National Park on the 12th January 2013 and rapidly escalated across the park estate and into adjoining private land. The fire was declared under Section 44 of the Bushfire Act (S44-12/13072) and burnt uncontained until 26 January 2013. The fire burnt in excess of 56,000 ha of land across all tenures, 24,000ha of which was National Park or Crown Land and 33,000 ha of private rural land.

The fire destroyed 53 houses and 113 out buildings with the majority of impact felt in the Warrumbungle Shire and significant involvement of neighboring LGAs Coonamble and Gilgandra. The impact area was contiguous and assessed on the basis of the primarily impacted LGA including the adjoining affected portions of the adjacent LGAs.

## Natural Disaster Declarations

To date, three local government areas have been included in a Natural Disaster Declaration for this event.

- Coonamble
- Gilgandra
- Warrumbungle

## NSW Natural Disaster Assistance Arrangements

The Natural Disaster Declaration in these local government areas makes several supportive schemes available under the NSW Disaster Assistance Arrangements (NSWDAA), which is supported by the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). These arrangements are available from [www.emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au) and address the provision of assistance to individuals, primary producers, small business and non-profit organisations.

# 2. Regional Overview

Significant features of the Recovery Operations for the Warrumbungle Shire included:

- Economic impacts including tourism due to the closure of the Siding Springs Observatory (up to a \$43 Million income per year)
- The Warrumbungle Bushfire Support Coordination Service (through Category A assistance from the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements)
- Establishment of a Mayor's Bushfire Appeal and management of donated goods
- Project management for asbestos clean-up and disposal across primary residences and other infrastructure
- The need to combine Recovery Centre services with outreach events due to the geographically spread location of residents engaged in clean up on properties and managing live-stock post the bushfires.

# 3. Recovery Structure

## Regional Recovery Coordinator

On 21 January 2013, the Minister for Emergency Services the Hon. Michael Gallagher MLC, appointed Mr Steve Bradshaw APM, as the Recovery Coordinator for Warrumbungle Shire. The Recovery Coordinator's key role is to oversee and facilitate recovery operations, assist recovery committees and assist facilitation and coordination of government, non-government and private sector organisations' services involved in the recovery process.

MPES provided guidance, support and secretariat services to the Recovery Coordinator and other agencies throughout the Recovery phase maintaining a physical presence in Coonabarabran. This included attendance by the State Emergency Operations Controller (SERCON)/Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director, the Deputy SERCON, Senior Managers and team members.

## Local Recovery Committees

The Warrumbungle Recovery Committee held its inaugural meeting on 17 January 2013. The Committee later established dedicated sub committees to oversee the four key recovery environments of Human Services; Infrastructure; Environment; Small Business and Tourism.

These sub-committees were formed in accordance with the NSW Recovery Arrangements and proved to play an essential role in assisting the community return to normal after the Recovery Centre closed.

## 4. Recovery Centre Coonabarabran Recovery Centre

A Recovery Centre was established on Friday 18 January at the Coonabarabran Council Community Hall, 27-29 John St, Coonabarabran. The centre operated from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, seven days a week. WSC support of the centre was exemplary, providing multiple staff, equipment, support and two Recovery Centre Managers who did an outstanding job.

The following agencies were present at the Centre:

- Disaster Welfare Services;
- Ministry for Police and Emergency Services Alumni;
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency;
- Australian Red Cross;
- Disaster Recovery Chaplin Network;
- Save the Children;
- Department of Primary Industry;
- Rural Assistance Authority;
- Housing NSW;
- NSW Health;
- Australian Government Department of Human Services (Centrelink);
- Warrumbungle Council; and
- Local banking institutions Westpac, Commonwealth Bank, Orana Mutual.

The Coonabarabran Recovery Centre operated from 18 January 2013 to 8 March 2013 at the Coonabarabran Council Community Hall and received a total of 1324 intakes.

On 8 March 2013, the Recovery Centre moved to the Warrumbungle Shire Council chambers providing a modified as needs service through council representatives. The Bushfire Support Coordination Service also moved to this location.

## Outreach Meetings

The Recovery Committee conducted an outreach meeting in Bugaldie to address concerns of assistance and information not reaching rural residents outside the Warrumbungle Shire Council (WSC) Area who were unable to attend the recovery centre. Agencies from the Coonabarabran Recovery Centre were able to attend and address local residents of the area. In addition to this meeting, Disaster Welfare Services and Centrelink conducted independent outreach event in Baradine to meet the demand and need of the surrounding areas.

The primary concern of the Bugaldie meeting involved the emergency warning system use of text messages. A number of Bugaldie residents using mobile carrier Optus, did not receive text message warnings to evacuate as this was only available to Telstra services. This should be referred to the Communications Functional Area Coordinator for follow up.

## **Communication Strategy**

During the response phase, the NSW Rural Fire Service held daily public community meetings at the Coonabarabran information point to relay important updates on the disaster event and related issues. The Recovery Coordinator, WSC Mayor, WSC General Manager and Recovery Committee representatives continued these public meetings on a weekly basis throughout the Recovery phase until May 2013 as a vital form of communication with the community.

WSC developed a Recovery Newsletter that was published on a weekly basis and distributed locally throughout the community via the postal service. The Volunteer Rescue Agency coordinated a letterbox drop service to expedite delivery of urgent and important information to residents e.g. asbestos contamination.

## **5. Impacts**

Details of impacts are detailed below in each of the recovery environments.

### **Human Services**

#### **Safety & Wellbeing**

Initial misinformation communicated at a Public Meeting a high level of community concern was generated about the potential toxicity of fire retardant used in RFS helicopters water drops. Subsequent RFS review identified a low level of toxicity that was limited to few properties.

Due to the regional location of the event, many properties use tank water systems.

NSW Environmental Health Services attended public meetings to address resident concerns that the fire retardant substance was not toxic to humans. A NSW Health Fact Sheet and Guidelines on how to clear and sterilise Water Tanks in Bushfire Affected Areas was provided at meetings and the recovery centre.

WSC Mayor's Fund Donations allocated funds for the provision of potable water (up to 10,000 Litres) and tank flushing for those who applied through Council. WSC used the recovery newsletter and communications channels to inform the community.

#### **Health**

The NSW Environmental Health Services provided ongoing water supply quality testing in conjunction with local water management resources. This testing was extended to private water sources including consultation and recommendations to residents.

Dam water testing was essential to due to community concern for water quality with the inflow of burnt material and deceased animals within the dam catchment area.

NSW Environmental Health Services also provided clarification and information to residents on the risks of asbestos contamination and the steps involved in clean up and disposal.

#### **Welfare**

The Recovery Centre had a number of Mental Health staff available including counsellors, chaplains and specialist adolescent mental health workers.

Due to the unique recovery situation, a one off Category A grant was secured for the Human Services Subcommittee to establish a Bushfire Support Coordination Service (BSCS). The BSCS Coordinator was appointed for a three month term to provide mental health support after the Recovery Centre downsized its service. Outreach through this service proved essential for the large number of producers required to put down large numbers of livestock. NSW Health are to report on the long term effects of bushfires on the communities.

The Recovery Coordinator and DSERCON attended Human Services Interagency Meetings to engage on the following issues:

- De-brief support for workers (this was arranged through Mental health) – many of the workers deployed to the Recovery Centre and/or involved in delivering services locally were themselves local residents and directly impacted or knew of family and friends who were directly impacted
- The need to address the younger community as the event occurred during holidays resulting in exposure to the disaster upon the start of the school term.
- Primary, High School and TAFE support counselling to be available and for updates to be provided to all students.

Housing was predicted to be a major issue for those unable to return to their properties and NSW Housing was engaged, however local need was not as great as predicted. Infrastructure

### **Asbestos Cleanup and Disposal**

Asbestos Clean Up and Disposal was one of the most challenging aspects of the Recovery phase.

It became clear during the initial phases of recovery that response and recovery agencies involved had varying and limited degrees of awareness and understanding of roles and responsibilities for asbestos in an emergency context under the recently published NSW Asbestos Blueprint. Although for some agencies risk assessment, clean up and disposal of asbestos is core business, officers reported that training, resourcing and procedures did not generally cater to the scale and dynamics of an emergency or define roles and responsibilities within a Recovery context.

At the time that the bushfires were contained, not all contaminated sites had been fully risk assessed and/or contained. The incidence and extent of contamination was therefore unknown and the transition of intelligence from response to recovery agencies was adhoc.

MPES in partnership with WSC took on a leadership and management role to coordinate an interagency approach to scoping the clean up and disposal project. The assistance of local and region based staff from Workcover, EPA, Department of Finance and Services (Public Works) (DPW) and the Environment experts from WSC was recruited. Advice was also sought from the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authority (HACA).

The distance between those operating on the ground and HACA and Combat agencies based in Sydney caused some difficulties in communication. In the instance where air borne asbestos was highlighted as a possible risk, it became apparent that no Standard Operating procedure exists for a full scale emergency evacuation due to asbestos.

A key issue was whether and how agencies would be reimbursed for staff hours and resources above and beyond core business during the Recovery phase. In addition, the existing NSW Disaster Assistance Guideline that applies to asbestos cleanup and disposal funding was found to be inadequate to deal with the scale and complexity of the event in Warrumbungle.

MPES in consultation with WSC negotiated and submitted an individual Business Case to NSW Treasury in order to activate the Guideline and extend its reach to secure funding for those residents who were uninsured and underinsured and for the costs associated with digging the disposal pit. This was particularly resource intensive given it occurred at the height of the event. Securement of this funding combined with the resolution across government for WSC to engage DPWs to project manage the clean up process largely resolved these issues.

Warrumbungle Recovery Committee formed an “Asbestos and General Waste Disposal Subcommittee” to coordinate interagency activities. The Warrumbungle Asbestos Management Plan was released 7 February 2013.

All 54 fire affected dwellings (51 inhabited, 3 abandoned) were inspected. Of this number 29 properties were confirmed as demonstrating friable asbestos and samples were collected for analysis. Nine landholders are listed as uninsured, of which two are underinsured.

Other properties demonstrate a range of waste issues including contaminated soil, masonry, metal, contaminated tyres, ash, general waste and unknown chemicals.

The primary challenges surrounding the management of asbestos cleanup which were identified at the de-brief included:

- Managing community expectations and perception of delays with the Asbestos Clean up and Disposal
- Unauthorized or unlicensed removal and burial of contaminated waste material.
- The potential for the quantity of waste to require a second landfill site which would be subject to approval from WorkCover and the Environmental Protection Authority.
- Negotiating agreement for a consistent “one in all in” approach to the clean up and disposal of asbestos across insured, uninsured and underinsured residents, Insurance Companies, Environmental Protection Agency, Work Cover, Public Works and WSC.
- Difficulties were experienced in accessing suitably qualified and accredited staff at short notice for example Occupational Hygienists.
- Communicating the dangers of fire damaged asbestos to the affected, ensuring no unnecessary community exposure.
- Ensuring landholders register their property and insurance status for assessment and inspection.
- The need for Standard Operating procedures and a funding arrangement that clearly outline roles and responsibilities to be available for future events impacted by asbestos
- Qualifications and accreditation of Occupational Hygienists and the competition for business between private contractors

### **General Waste Cleanup and Disposal**

Following the release of the general waste plan and flow chart, WSC conducted a preliminary assessment on properties to determine the quantity of general waste. Subsidised landfill was coordinated through Council, who provided tickets to those who were fire affected for free access to landfill.

Rural land owners bordering National Parks were consulted on the financial implications of damage to fences. National Parks and Wildlife offered to supply fencing materials under their responsibility as joint fence holder. Property owners were responsible for erecting fences or obtaining assistance through Blazeaid.

### **Public Infrastructure, Roads, Bridges & Culverts**

The roadway though the Warrumbungle National Park remained closed due to extensive damage to road safety items and the risk of falling trees. The rectification of the heavily damaged section of road was impeded by responsibility falling across multiple LGA.

The WSC identified a major road safety issue created by damaged roadside fencing and wandering livestock. Based upon damage assessments, the Mayor’s Fund Committee allocated monies to subsidise half of the cost of replacing roadside fencing.

WSC addressed community concern for dangerous and fallen trees along arterial roads (school bus routes) with local resources and coordination with Roads and Maritime Services.

### **Small Business and Tourism**

#### **Businesses**

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) initiated and coordinated the fodder donations process. At the local level logistics and storage were undertaken by the Coonabarabran Livestock Health and Pest Authority office.

NSW DPI completed a centralised mapping of agricultural impact assessments, property inspections and fodder distribution. The Rural Support Worker Program will continue in the affected areas.



## Tourism

The Warrumbungle Royal National Park (WRNP) was a significant part of the local tourism portfolio. The Small Business and Tourism Subcommittee consulted with local business and Tourism NSW to redesign the Warrumbungle tourism plan. WSC is developing preparing tourism strategy around promoting the now transparent natural rock formations in the National Park and previous attractions including astronomy. In the interim, an information article with photos was distributed through local media to promote disaster tourism from adjacent areas over the Easter period.

WRNP faced an extensive closure period for restoration of park services and attractions. A burned area assessment team were engaged to complete a rapid assessment report, identifying flora and fauna damage. The rectification works necessary before the opening of the park include a temporary visitors centre, restoration of utilities, rendering public areas safe from falling trees, erosion, restoring camping and recreational assets.

## Environment

Through the WRNP burned area rapid assessment the key impacts on the natural environment include:

- Loss of flora and fauna
- Soil erosion
- Damage to catchments (erosion, debris, siltation)
- Damage to park furniture, BBQ's and local recreational assets impacts upon amenity and tourism

## 6. Summary and Observations

### General

As Recovery Coordinator, I would like to recognise the efforts of all persons involved in the response and recovery phases of this natural disaster. The unique challenges of this disaster stood as a learning experience for all involved.

Undoubtedly the greatest challenge of the Recovery process was the management of friable asbestos contamination on fire affected properties. The experience gained from the Local to State level will ensure a more efficient response and serve as a benchmark for future incidents. WSC with the assistance of WorkCover NSW and NSW Public works were able to expedite the development of an Asbestos Management Plan and other working documents for the cleanup process within a matter of days.

WSC must be commended for their demonstration of leadership from the local level in every aspect of the Recovery process. The flexibility of State Government agencies must also be noted. Examples include National Parks and Wildlife providing supplies to all neighbouring properties who lost fencing and extending feral animal culls without cost to adjoining properties where animals had taken shelter. This is good government should not go unheralded.

Any comments and recommendations that are made in this report are made in good faith with a view to improving the process in the future. I do not believe there were any failings, however the time spent during Recovery in ground breaking planning, experimentation and subsequent implementation should be on record to do justice to the recovery process.

### Local Government

WSC remained at the front of Recovery operations. Areas of such leadership include the support provided to asbestos cleanup, making Recovery locations available and acceptance of the role of MPES. Examples of WSC flexibility in decision making include the creation of the Mayor's Appeal Fund and the use of donated funds to fix roadside fencing outside of shire boundaries, this was in my view is true community leadership.

I also make note of comments from a number of emergency management experts regarding the pre fire planning of the Local Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Rescue Sub Committee which served as the catalyst for more damage not being occasioned.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1: RFS Asbestos assessment.**

In the early stages of the Recovery process, it was indicated via the NSW Asbestos Blueprint that the lead combat agency is responsible for the risk assessment, scoping and containment of asbestos within burnt buildings. I believe this was not completed at Coonabarabran due to the large scale nature of the disaster and potentially insufficient training of RFS personnel in their roles and responsibilities in this area.

It is recommended that this issue be raised with HACA urgently, and that appropriate consultation with RFS and a review of the RFS responsibility in this area and/or a review of RFS training in this area are completed.

### **Recommendation 2: Friable Asbestos Removal.**

The task of coordinating the development of Standard Operating Procedures and a funding arrangement for key agencies involved in implementing the NSW Asbestos Blueprint during an emergency be referred to HACA for implementation across government.

### **Recommendation 3: Fodder Distribution.**

DPI initiated a fodder donation service and tasked the local office of the Land Health and Pest Authority with the storage and distribution of donations for area. It appears that no formal arrangements were instituted between the two agencies, resulting in producer complaints around service due to internal disputes.

This matter is referred to LHPA for resolution via the formalisation of services by Memorandum of Understanding or procedure.

### **Recommendation 4: Emergency Management Training for Council Staff.**

During the recovery process it was confirmed by key WSC staff, that employees involved in the Recovery process had received little or no training in emergency management procedures and Recovery.

It is recommended that Council employees in management positions or positions likely to be involved in emergency operations complete at the very least the Introduction to Emergency Management Course and the Introduction to Recovery Training provided through MPES. Training is in the process of being organised by WSC.

### **Recommendation 5: Mitigation (National Parks and Wildlife Hazard Reduction)**

There was significant community comment and criticism regarding the hazard reduction activities of NPWS which will be a key issue for the Coroner's inquest. This community perception applies to many communities adjoining National Parks throughout Australia.

In discussion with the Warrumbungles National Park Management I ascertained that the NPWS have significant hazard reductions plans formulated to address asset protection, strategic burns for fire prevention and Propagation burns. Over the past four years significantly wet winters have prevented the total planned burns across parks in the Warrumbungle area. Of note over the last 5 years, NPWS have conducted 9 prescribed burns totalling 900 ha in the Warrumbungle National Park.

The Northern Plains Region for National Parks comprising Coonabarabran, Baradine and Narrabri areas have completed 15 prescribed burning programmes totalling 8,833 ha. This is more than any other Region in NSW. A further 7,139 ha was scheduled to be burnt in autumn 2013.

Regardless of opinion if more can be done this issue remains a cause of community concern and basis for a potential class action.

For this reason I recommend an audit of national hazard reduction procedures in order to ascertain if sufficient action is being undertaken. The audit should also consider the viability of introducing grazing to appropriate sections of the park to reduce fuel load on a regular basis. Warrumbungle Shire General Manager Steve Loane has recommended a suitably qualified wild fire expert, Mr. Lew Short, 0419 203 853, LewS@ecoaus.com.au.

**Recommendation 6: Australia Post.**

Concerns were raised with Australia Post about delays to delivery of the WSC Recovery Newsletter resulting from Australia Post contractual arrangements and the requirement for 21 days notice prior to mail out. While the delay was quickly rectified, this is clearly not a suitable arrangement during an emergency recovery operation.

For this reason it is recommended that MPES conduct negotiations with Australia Post to draft emergency management procedures to meet this demand.

**Recommendation 7: Recovery Plan**

When the Recovery process was in full motion, competing demands resulted in the local Recovery plan not being completed until well into the Recovery phase. The Recovery process must be driven by a plan and this plan needs to be produced at the beginning for all parties to be briefed. The plan must include tasks to be updated and assessed as recovery progresses and allow quick reference and action. A format that is a living and working document similar to an investigation plan or running sheet in law enforcement circles would serve this process.

There has been some criticism from the community and victims that the recovery process ended too early. This was despite an Exit Plan being negotiated and minuted at the May 2013 Recovery Committee and may have been compounded by the unexpected serious injury sustained to myself as the Recovery Coordinator which halted my involvement in the recovery and the community.

There was a statement made to the disaster affected community early during the recovery process by MPES that the Recovery Centre would stay open as long as it was needed. This proved to be mis- interpreted by some as state government assistance would be available as long as it was perceived as being needed by the community. These criticisms may be well placed and something to consider in future recovery processes and exit planning – in combination with ensuring that dependence is not inappropriately fostered to the point where it hampers resilience building.

I recommend the development of a written Recovery agreement between Council and MPES is completed at the outset that addresses the best timing for the MPES Recovery Team to exit. This would create a flexible exit plan that will not raise expectations beyond a capacity to fulfil.

**Recommendation 8: Recovery Sub Committees**

The decision to use a Recovery subcommittee model, identified the need for appointed chairs to receive emergency management training to ensure all parties are aware of procedures and responsibility. This could be supported through a structure outlining reporting procedures and expectations of the subcommittee operation.

The need for subcommittees in Recovery is paramount, as the local membership of these can assist and drive strategies that return the community to normality well after the Recovery committee has been disbanded. It is recommended that emergency management and Recovery training be provided to as many functional agencies as possible and the Regional Emergency Management Officer be tasked to train and support as the Recovery is in progress.

**Recommendation 9: The Disaster Victim Registration (DVR)**

The NSW Police Force is responsible for the DVR process, whilst other agencies can assist on their behalf, the DVR Form is centered on accounting for "people". However there is a growing trend for "Welfare" based agencies to collect and access information as early as possible for the preparation and scoping of their operations. In these cases the first point of initial information collection is the DVR form.

The evacuation process has changed to a strategic and planned operation, in contrast to the historical "reactive" approach. This places greater emphasis on collecting information "pre-evacuation" as welfare agencies request access to DVR information immediately. Unfortunately the information collected on DVR forms has limited "Welfare" usage concentrating on "people" status and not "people circumstances" which are key to mobilising Welfare based resources and providing intelligence for the Recovery phase.

The collection of relevant and informative data at the DVR source will assist Welfare and in turn, Recovery operations. DVR forms were first introduced in early 1990's after the Nyngan Flood event of April 1990 and

there is a need to review the current DVR forms to determine suitability to current needs. My first suggestion is the introduction of two new Yes/No columns on the form to determine ownership of the affected residence and insurance status.

The alternative is a welfare form/Recovery Form similar to the DVR Form which can be used at registration points, assembly areas and welfare centers to collect key identification data name / address / intended address etc. This could be designed with a welfare specific emphasis (catering also to recovery needs) and include Data such as insurance status, ownership and persons residing or registering to that property.

The "DVR Form" would remain a NSWPF responsibility, as per current legislation. The "Evacuation Registration Form" could be an "Incident Controller" responsibility implemented by Combat Agencies and Emergency Operation Controllers (EOCONs). This form would also be able to be completed by Property Owners / Parents / Guardians / Facility Managers. The primary use of form would be in "Pre-Evacuation" stages to assist the scoping of evacuation operations; and registering people before they are evacuated.

Another criticism from the community was notification from multiple combat and functional agencies attending residences post fire. Some agencies were marking front gates by leaving tape or markers. This provides no description or indication to property owners who are unable to identify if their property is part of the investigation, safe to enter or otherwise.

My recommendation is the development of a common method for all agencies to utilise that ensures disaster affected people are informed of who has been to their premises and what was the result of that visit and status of their property. The Warrumbungle Recovery Debrief raised the concept of a universal calling card for each property which I support to be developed by NSWPF

#### **Recommendation 10: The Mayors Appeal**

Due to the high level of donations the WSC set up a Mayors Appeal fund to manage cash donations. While other community and service clubs generated donations, they were unable to donate directly to the Mayoral fund due to club guidelines and concern of unequal distribution.

There is a need for procedures and systems for local governments to support the limited experience many LGAs have in the administration of this form funding. It is important to note the high potential for mistakes to cause "political fallout", resulting in damage to the "good will" of people, setting back recovery programs and the local political scene. The developed of a "manual" would be of great benefit to LGAs and provide guidance throughout the donations management process. In the case of WSG MPES staff attended Coonabarabran and met with WSC to guide them through the best options for establishing and maintaining the Appeal.

Guidelines to assist Local Governments in establishing and managing a "Mayors Funds" can address financial accounts, the collection of financial donations, sample "Media Releases" for guidance and templates to advise the sending of cash over "unwanted Goods".

From an administrative perspective there is the need to review the legality of audit processes on bank accounts and expenditure. Other areas to address include Local Government financial audit processes and delegations of expenditure regulations applicable to Local Government. This is particularly relevant to local tender and supply policies that Local Government may have in-place.

I must place on the record my positive observations of the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Fund, it's transparency, efficiency and most of all its effectiveness to assist victims in a positive way.

#### **Recommendation 11: Federal Government / State Government Grants:**

The Australian Government Disaster Relief Payment is common knowledge in welfare circles and availability in the Warrumbungle area led to allegations within the community of people receiving payment despite doubt of their eligibility.

Under the current arrangements the Federal Government declares grant availability according to LGA area which may not be appropriate with the amalgamation of local governments and expansion of Local Government areas. The continuation of this approach will compound the current problem.

I recommend the incorporation of material collected from people that have been registered on the "DVR". State Welfare agencies need to be consulted and engaged in the process before grants are just paid on individual presentations to Centrelink.

**Recommendation 12: Sharing of Operational "Welfare" based information between "State" and "Federal" government agencies:**

There is a need for greater co-operation and communication between agencies though formal "agreements" between State Government Disaster Welfare Services and Federal Government agency Centrelink. The agreement could address any potential or identified privacy issues and enable the sharing and exchange of information toward greater decision making on the administration of grants.

In the Warrumbungle Shire grants of \$1000 per Adult and \$400 per child were paid to some residents at whom it was alleged by others in the community did not lose electricity for more than 48 hours, which was the established time for payments under Centrlink policy. The perception of inappropriate payments are very divisive within a community, especially small rural communities where community information spreads very quickly. Operational Incident Controllers and support agencies should be consulted before Grants are paid.

**Recommendation 13: Combat Agencies and Recovery.**

All combat agencies involved in the Coonabarabran Fire performed exceptionally however some gaps were identified in the role combat agencies play in the Recovery process. This responsibility needs to be incorporated into Recovery instructions and emphasize the important role that combat agencies play in Recovery. Furthermore, combat agency representatives appointed to Recovery Committees and public meetings should be suitably ranked to make decisions and provide advice without reference.

**Recommendation 14:**

Unfortunately NSW Housing did not have a system for managing donations of housing and accommodation offered by local members of the community and Real Estate agents. These included the offer of vacant holiday homes, apartments and share arrangements. Criticism was given at Public Meetings and in other forums by both those offering the accommodation and those seeking accommodation that there wasn't a matching system in place and offers were also not being vetted in any way.

The issue was resolved to some degree with the Recovery Centre acting as a point of contact however it is recommended that NSW Housing consider the development of an emergency response system for managing such offers in the future.



# WARRUMBUNGLE BUSHFIRE SUPPORT COORDINATION SERVICE

## THREE MONTH REPORT

Report date: 18 May 2013.

### *Executive Summary*

This report covers the first three months of operation of the Warrumbungle Bushfire Support Coordination Service (BSCS). It details the context in which the service was designed and instigated, the structure and process of operation, and describes service provision in this first period. The report concludes with an analysis of service provision, community recovery and coordination issues, and some recommendations for the next three month period. The report has been prepared by BSCS workers and MPES; contact details are provided at the end of the report.

At the time the data for this report was compiled it was not known how long the BSCS would be required in Warrumbungle Shire. It is critical to acknowledge that recovery from a bushfire, such as the one experienced in January 2013, is a long term process, both for individuals in their unique recovery, and for the broader community. Transition to core ongoing service provision in the human services sector is important to plan as soon as feasible. This is because it is appropriate to restore to the service sector their normal business and function, and because it indicates to the community that recovery is progressing. There are risks in pathologising the recovery process if disaster-specific services are maintained for longer than is appropriate. Linked to this assessment however is the absolute importance of planning this transition process, and ensuring to the greatest extent possible that such services are ready to absorb any ongoing bushfire-related work. Therefore a range of inputs and professional development activities have been and will continue to be arranged across the interagency network to support services.

Over the next three month period the BSCS workers and management will closely monitor demand and recovery trends in the community to inform decision making about withdrawal of the service and transition to the ongoing service structure. A final report will be prepared at the conclusion of the BSCS.

## *Background*

The Wambelong fire of 13 January 2013 burnt out more than 56,000 hectares, destroyed 53 houses and 120 sheds, and damaged additional property. The fire also caused major damage to facilities such as the Siding Spring Observatory and Warrumbungle National Park. This has had a consequent impact on tourism for Coonabarabran. The impact on primary production has also been significant due to damage to grazing land, infrastructure such as fencing and feed sheds, and the loss of stock.

Due to the losses sustained for householders and the significant recovery process that needed to be undertaken, a coordinated support service for people adversely affected by the bushfire was conceptualised within the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (MPES), and discussed with Warrumbungle Shire Council (the Council) in the days immediately following the fire. Consultation with NSW Treasury and the Emergency Management Australia (EMA) Division of the Attorney-General's Department gained support for the proposal, funded through the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

Staff of MPES's Disaster Welfare Service (DWS) and Planning and Resilience Branch, together with a seconded officer from the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), developed the model for the service and a detailed manual of operating guidelines and tools (refer Appendix 1). Colleagues involved in the recovery from both the Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires and New Zealand Canterbury Earthquakes also provided reference material regarding support services implemented in both jurisdictions. The BSCS commenced operation on 18 February 2013.

## *Outline of service model*

- The BSCS provides an individualised, relationship-based service to adversely affected households, to support individuals and facilitate their recovery from the bushfire, and strengthen their capacity over time.
- It is a temporary service jointly funded by NSW and Commonwealth Governments under the NDRRA, with the Council providing in-kind support.
- The BSCS supplements the existing human services system in the district to meet additional demand, provide extended (out of hours) service and ensure that individuals, households and primary producers who have experienced significant loss can access trained support workers.
- The BSCS is an outreach service that provides a point of contact to help service users navigate and access the range of services that they may require.
- The BSCS works with households to engage with services, provide support, assist in seeking financial assistance or information, navigate the range of services/grants/loans available, and co-ordinate with appropriate agencies for immediate needs.

## *Principles underpinning the service*

- One service across two outlets the BSCS draws on the skills of both government and non-government community-based human services agencies working collaboratively.
- The service is free, voluntary and accessible all those who have experienced distress, significant losses and trauma should have access to support to assist in their recovery process.
- Service delivery is locally-driven trained workers in local human service agencies are best placed to offer this service.
- The service is supported the service is coordinated locally and support is provided by Local, State and Commonwealth Governments.
- The service is securely linked into the broader recovery processes for the community the BSCS is represented on the Recovery Committee and its Human Services Sub Committee.
- Service delivery is flexible and responsive and provides continuity of care though the BSCS is of finite duration, the supportive relationships formed will assist long-term recovery.
- A commitment to high quality service delivery the service seeks to provide services of the highest standard.

## *Community Consultation and staffing*

The consultation process was significant during January-February 2013 and included DWS meeting with the Coonabarabran Interagency, local and district NSW Health management, FACS, Barnardos and Council. Also pivotal were consultations with MPES Response and Recovery Branch, the Warrumbungle Recovery Coordinator and Recovery Committee, and the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Fund Advisory Panel. A BSCS Steering Group of key human service agencies was established to provide ongoing local level consultation regarding community needs. Also based at the Recovery Centre during this period were the Disaster Welfare Service Manager and Team, responsible for administering disaster relief grants under the Personal Hardship and Distress component of the NDRRA. As the majority of residents whose homes were destroyed were covered by insurance, only a small proportion of residents were eligible for any assistance from this source.

Identified as crucial to the effectiveness and credibility of the service were skilled, local workers. Backgrounds in crisis intervention, basic counselling, family support, paediatric and mental health experience, and familiarity with local networks and services, were required. As a result, the BSCS Coordinator was sought from local/district health units and the additional family support worker hours through Barnardos, a well established local outlet of a key non-government agency with specialist skill in family work. The intent was for Barnardos support workers to mainly engage children and families, and the fulltime Coordinator to engage adults and couples.

A former Mental Health staff member was engaged as a casual staff member of MPES to fill the BSCS Coordinator position. NSW Health assisted by sourcing accommodation for the Coordinator during the week, and as already mentioned Council provides office accommodation, landline, printing, and associated resources. MPES provides a leased car, laptop and blackberry to enable the Coordinator to work flexibly to address the needs of the community, via home visiting, telecommuting, and after-hours availability- Barnardos provides support worker service hours based on demand for child and family work, inclusive of supervision, car and office support. This input is shared across two Barnardos workers who deliver service from the Barnardos office in Coonabarabran. Barnardos is also one of the four local NGOs engaged to administer immediate and emergency needs assistance from the Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Fund and sits on the Panel. This linkage is extremely valuable in ensuring that information and referrals between the BSCS, the Fund, and other local services are timely and effective.

Duty statements, training resource material, worker health and safety information, supervision arrangements, practice ethics, resource lists, service delivery forms and protocols, management information system, service policies, intervention model and references comprise the BSCS Manual referred to above. Workers are further supported via line management from MPES, Barnardos regional management, the locally-based Steering Committee, and weekly teleconferences including Barnardos and MPES management. BSCS workers regularly attend the Interagency, Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Fund Panel, and Bushfire Public Meetings to promote communication and service delivery.

The core of the support worker role is support for people seeking assistance across a variety of issues, including insurance claims, completion of forms, replacement of lost documents, assistance with future planning, and brief psychological interventions and support when necessary. Through secondary interventions such as consultation, community education, media releases, and specific problem-solving meetings, other inputs include psycho-education, peer support, professional development for other agencies, needs analysis and individual or systemic advocacy.

## *Reporting and evaluation*

Each support worker maintains brief case notes of the work with service users from intake/referral through assessment, planning, review and closure, as outlined in the BSCS Manual. Weekly activity reports are provided and a centralised database of service delivery is maintained. This overview report is written at the three months stage and a final report will be written at the closure of the service.

Issues regarding confidentiality were carefully considered in establishing a service across two outlets and two participating agencies. Consent forms are signed by service users at the initial meeting to facilitate sharing of information in order to meet users' needs. Referrals between the two service outlets are sometimes made whereby the particular skills of different workers may be drawn upon during service provision.



An evaluation of the BSCS has been negotiated with The University of Newcastle Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health. This will commence after University Ethics Approval has been received at approximately six months after the BSCS commenced.

The evaluation will comprise three components:

- Survey of current and former service users;
- Semi-structured telephone interview of key stakeholders (human service agencies);
- Online survey for community members.

#### *Thematic recovery and service delivery issues noted in the first three months of operation*

- As there was no master list of those affected by the fire, it took to early March 2013 to establish a comprehensive list of those affected. This was achieved by sharing information between the BSCS, the Recovery Centre Manager and Council more broadly.
- The shared information remains confidential between these services, and there are a number of residents common to these services.
- Initially there was a level of reluctance by some people to use the BSCS, however the Recovery Centre Manager provided many referrals which assisted early referral and growing confidence of householders to approach the service, and credibility of the BSCS as a helping agency.
- All early referrals were individuals whose home had been destroyed in the bushfire; supportive counselling and assistance with any concerns following their loss was offered. These referrals were in part stimulated by the Disaster Welfare Team based at the Recovery Centre in January-February telephoning all known affected households regarding current needs and obtaining permission for the BSCS, once operational, to contact them.
- Since mid April 2013 there has been greater contact with primary producers who have lost significant amounts of fencing, feed, and in some cases, stock. Replacing fencing is costly, and the generous assistance of BlazeAid and the Lions Club has assisted in many cases.
- Crisis intervention and loss counselling, information and advocacy, psychosocial assessment, and referral to health, financial and local government services, have been the main inputs in the first three months.
- The issues for bushfire-affected people vary for each individual, ranging from those who decided very early to rebuild, and commenced their planning in the first two weeks following the fire, to those who are still deciding when and where to rebuild.
- As the BSCS role became established, more people were comfortable speaking about their experiences of the fire, resulting in extended home visits.
- Since early May 2013 the majority of BSCS contacts have been with primary producers, many of whom had significant infrastructure destroyed, such as fencing, feed, and in some cases stock.
- Presenting issues after the initial crisis period have included insurance company negotiations, asbestos removal, Centrelink and Tax implications of insurance payouts, replacement of lost documents, financial stress, referrals to BlazeAid, and supportive counselling.
- Service promotion regarding the BSCS was via advertisements in the local newspaper, Council Bushfire newsletter, a mail out to people affected by the fire, public meetings, and contacting related services in the district, such as health, police, local medical practitioners and NGOs.
- Moving the BSCS to the Council's new offices in early March reinforced the BSCS role, as well as forging closer working relationships with the Recovery Centre Manager and Council Executive.
- The BSCS has also assisted people to access financial support from the Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Fund.
- The Fund has assisted affected property owners with fencing to the value of \$1000 for roadside fencing (uncapped) per kilometre, or \$2000 for internal fencing. There is also assistance for shed and house rebuilding, with the Council waiving Development Application fees for those who lost their principal place of residence in the fire.
- BSCS interviews can be conducted at the Council building or Barnardos office, but where possible, home visits are made, as people feel more comfortable in their own environment, and are more open to discuss their experiences. The sharing of their stories about the bushfire has proven cathartic for these individuals.
- Working from Council offices has enabled closer contact with various Council departments, which has proven helpful assisting people in the support of their clean-up and rebuilding plans.
- A major clean-up issue has been the disposal of the asbestos waste. This has been a major frustration and slowed down the rebuilding plans of many households. The holdup was caused by

lack of contractors authorized to remove friable asbestos. The clean-up of asbestos-affected properties was finally completed by 17 May 2013, with the closing of the asbestos cells at the local waste disposal facility.

- Where people are having difficulty with insurance claims they are referred to either the Insurance Council of Australia or NSW Department of Fair Trading.
- Since the initial devastation of the fire in January, many affected households have been able to move on from the role of “bushfire victim” to “fire-affected household” as a process of recovery and looking towards the future. While there are still a number of people who have not made a decision on whether to rebuild, many are planning their future in the shire including rebuilding their homes. Three Development Applications have been lodged with the Council and approved (as at 18 May 2013).
- While it is pleasing to see a move for many into a recovery role as demonstrated by rebuilding plans in the community, a small number of people have decided not to rebuild and have purchased elsewhere in the shire, or have left the area. At the time of writing this report this is less than five people.
- As people move into different tasks of their recovery, so will the BSCS role evolve to meet the needs of the community, with an emphasis on their recovery and future planning.

*Service provision in the first three months – quantitative data*

The table below summarises service data in this reporting period.

<b>BSCS contacts 18.02.13 – 17.05.13</b>	
<b>Number of referrals:</b>	69
<b>Number of initial contacts:</b>	69
<b>Number of service users:</b>	62 (households)
<b>Home Visits:</b>	73
<b>Phone Contacts:</b>	155
<b>Face to Face:</b>	133

The primary reasons for referral are lost home/severe damage (14%); other damage/loss (9%); relationship issue (3%); health including mental health issues (3%); and assistance regarding rebuilding concerns (71%). This last category is broken down into needs such as information, support, advocacy, accessing the Mayor’s Fund, and clean-up. Secondary reasons for referral, where listed, are lost home/severe damage (73%); relationship issue (20%); and health including mental health issues (7%).

Main service provision types are support (16%); information and advocacy (69%); counselling or referral to counselling services (11%); and general health referrals (4%). A more detailed breakdown of services provided and referrals made, indicates that a broad array of needs are addressed: service club vouchers for material assistance; insurance issues; health, mental health and wellbeing issues; relationship issues; aged care referrals; other financial assistance; asbestos cleanup; insurance claims against the Rural Fire Service (RFS); taxation or Centrelink assistance; BlazeAid liaison; and Warrumbungle Shire Council matters. Referrals and information regarding the Mayor’s Fund are the most numerous.

At the three month mark, 42% of cases had been closed. These matters were closed largely because no further contact had been made by service users, and in a few cases because the need could be addressed in a single contact or because the user’s whereabouts were unknown and no follow up could be arranged.

The Service Coordinator has been the primary worker for 67% of cases; Barnardos part time support workers for 16% and service has been provided jointly by workers in 17% of cases.

*Service provision in the first three months – qualitative data*

Early recovery issues revolved around feeling forgotten; that no-one cared; seeking validation of loss; and anxiety caused by the daily exposure to the required clean-up still onsite. In early March, one family had broken up. One elderly couple who had been visited by a support worker reported to their neighbour afterwards that they felt that someone did care.

Concern about fire-damaged trees falling and the cost of their removal arose in the early days. The issue of asbestos removal became dominant in the early stages also and the expressed need for swift action to

assess and safely remove it to allow clearing and rebuilding. Also of concern was the volume of paperwork required by Council regarding damaged or destroyed property and that it was experienced as overwhelming for some residents.

It was noted in these first weeks February-March that residents responded very well to home visits and this practice has continued. Some residents are noted to have stronger support networks than others and that this would be an important factor in recovery. Trust has been developed between residents and support workers, enabling residents to talk about deeper concerns including matters that have been raised at the public meetings and not considered to be satisfactorily resolved at that time. Support workers have been able to advocate in regard to this so that concerns could be raised with the appropriate individuals to follow through. Both this aspect of developing trust in the helping relationship, and the importance of responding quickly to resident concerns to alleviate community unrest and tension, have been highlighted in community recovery in other disasters, for example after the Black Saturday fires in Victoria, and in the work of Dr Rob Gordon.

Promotion of the service in the early weeks was identified as an important task.

By April it was noted that residents were becoming fatigued, and feeling overwhelmed by bureaucratic demands while appreciating the need for these. The requirements entailed in applying for varying types of assistance have become a disincentive for some people to make applications – a factor also observed after Black Saturday. By this time the Recovery Committee had ceased to operate which reduced the capacity for concerns to be fed back to various authorities other than through the BSCS or other agencies. Residents were feeling burdened by concurrently needing to carry out work on their properties such as fencing, shed repairs, planning for rebuilding etc.

The slow process of asbestos removal (until mid May in one case) delayed the clean-up process. Lost fencing and infrastructure, has led to additional demands in feeding and watering stock. Uncertainty regarding building regulations in fire-prone areas also created anxiety at this stage. Concurrently families have needed to manage children's needs, day-time jobs, temporary housing considerations and their grieving process. Rent, extra fuel and mobile phone expenses, and the cost of stock feed add to their usual living expenses. Navigating the process to obtain reimbursement for property damage caused by RFS in fighting the fire has become an issue during May. This necessitated advocacy and support by the support workers to assist residents work through the application and evidence-building process.

Mayoral funds released to the non-government agencies have been expended rapidly and as time progressed different needs came to light, such as big ticket items like refrigerators, generators, bedding, doonas etc. Accessing grants from sources other than the Mayor's Fund has caused distress for some residents due to the intrusive nature of the information sought in order to qualify including provision of evidence as to how any grant was spent.

As a sign of community resilience and cohesion, support workers note the neighbourly concern expressed in the area and instrumental support provided to address individuals' needs. Some families have taken up the offers of holiday accommodation outside the area. The simple opportunity to share experiences informally within people's social networks is noted to be very cathartic, as has been found in previous disasters.

### *Emerging issues*

- At the time of this report, a number of affected people still had their insurance claims outstanding. Difficulties with insurance companies have been a significant issue, even within the same company.
- Primary producers have lost a significant amount of fencing, which will add considerable financial burden to many farmers. Replacement of fencing is about \$2000 per kilometre, and some farms lost in excess of 50 km of fencing.
- There are also twelve houses that were not insured and did not have asbestos in the destroyed building(s), which still have to be cleaned up. This will be a considerable cost to the individual property owner, which may add to the financial stress for these owners. Where people are insured, the clean-up costs are included in the total settlement payout, however those that were uninsured will have to bear the cost themselves.
- At the time of this report, dry weather has been a concern for winter feed, and this will add pressure to financially burdened primary producers.

- There are some reports of difficulties with fencing for people who have property bordering the Warrumbungle National Park. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is meant to provide fencing materials with farmers supplying the labour. It has been reported that the agreement with the NPWS is overly onerous regarding the responsibilities of the land owner. This has been discussed with BlazeAid and NPWS. A less onerous system is now in place, and if a person does not have stock, there is no requirement for them to re-fence the boundary.
- To date there have been no major mental health issues identified and no referrals have been made to area mental health services. The BSCS has been monitoring for mental health issues, and has good rapport with the local health services, general practitioners and mental health services.
- While most people are insured, not all insurance payouts cover all items damaged in fires, such as the removal of burnt trees on properties. When people start rebuilding there will be unexpected costs which may prove stressful. At this stage it is hard to estimate the number of households who will be affected. There were about eight properties not insured, however three of those were sheds, and not the main place of residence.
- It should be remembered that in early January 2013 the affected families were not planning to rebuild their homes in 2013, much less sheds, fencing or re-establishing pastures and crops.

#### *Broader community recovery planning issues*

- Coordination of donated goods has been problematic and information has not been easily accessible regarding what goods may be available and how to source them. This leads to confusion and criticism and a sense that distribution is not equitable. People have little time or emotional energy to try to navigate the offers of assistance. Central coordination of multiple offers of assistance would lead to greater efficiencies and maximum benefits for disaster-affected families.
- Communication between agencies distributing funds or services has not always been adequate or responsive. The more agencies involved the more complex the distribution becomes. Considerations regarding streamlining processes would facilitate the efficient distribution of assistance.
- Multiple channels for information dissemination are required to ensure that people can reliably access the recovery information that they need. Not all households easily access the internet or read local newspapers.
- Transparent information sharing between agencies on behalf of service users will facilitate responsive and well targeted assistance. This has not been effective in the early months after the fire and has led to frustration. Recovery Centre intake or registration forms and referral forms between agencies should include a consent statement for sharing information. The forms used by recovery and other agencies should be reviewed to ensure this.
- Recovery is a long term and gradual process. Both disaster-affected people and local services need permission to acknowledge that daily functioning, relationships, homes, and emotional states will take time to adjust or repair, and return to a "new normal". The sense of urgency to fix things immediately needs to be resisted, as some decisions need adequate time to be carefully considered.
- A number of older people are physically unable to handle the manual labour required to clean up their properties. Access to support for clean-up is required where people are not eligible for NSW Government clean-up assistance.

#### *Issues to be addressed in the next three months*

- An emerging theme is claims against the RFS for damage caused by fire tankers for example when creating fire breaks. These claims involve substantial work for the claimant, and the BSCS continues to assist affected people, by helping them develop their draft claims, and when necessary taking high quality digital SLR photos.
- The BSCS role will continue to evolve in the next three months to assist households on their journey of recovery. Support will continue to be provided to those who require it. This will include ongoing support as previously provided, as well as a focus on the physical and mental health wellbeing of individuals.
- If the needs become greater than the BSCS team can manage, this will be discussed with MPES and Council.

### *Recommendations regarding the current service*

- The BSCS role will need to be reviewed and a withdrawal strategy developed for the conclusion of the role. The role was initially to be for six months, but at present it is hard to predict if the role will need to go for longer. The weekly data will need to be monitored for trends for demand of service. If there is a reduction in demand for services then the BSCS role will be reviewed with a view to final closure of the service.
- The greatest concern for primary producers is feed for winter, and the added financial burden of replacing fencing and stock.
- Of those who lost their home to fire, some have expressed concern about rebuilding due to risk of another bushfire in the area.
- These groups will need support as they move through their journey of recovery, but as they grow stronger in their journey the need for the BSCS will decrease.
- The severity of the fire has had an impact on the whole community, and especially those who have been directly impacted by the fire.
- The BSCS has maintained notes of all contacts with service users and this will remain the property of MPES on the closure of the service. Plans for onward referral or handover to other services regarding any service users' needs at the time the BSCS is due to close, will need to be carefully negotiated with service users and other stakeholders well in advance. Service users will have control over what information may be shared with other service providers and will be fully advised of plans to close the service as well as other services available locally.

### *Recommendations regarding a future iteration of the service*

- The location of a support service should consider issues such as ease of physical access and convenience, flexibility of operational hours, independence from private/for profit stakeholders, and a host agency that is perceived as local and committed to the community. A local government context is generally considered the most appropriate location. Sensitivities regarding the approval process for rebuilding, or other council-level policy matters, require careful management to assure the community that objective and evidence-based decision processes are followed.
- Coordinators and support workers of similar disaster recovery support services are ideally local residents with a sound knowledge of their community. It is important that they operate from a holistic, biopsychosocial approach and a community development skills base. Critical skills are communication and relationship-building skills, to enable them to work with residents who have experienced trauma. Recovery manuals list the criteria that form the profile of the knowledge, skills and values of appropriate workers.
- Disaster recovery support services need to be well advertised and actively promoted within the affected community, as approaching a service for help can be an unfamiliar process for many people, often perceived as a failure or weakness. Communicating recovery principles and messages throughout the community is an important role for a recovery support service. Identifying and encouraging signs of individual and community resilience are important strategies that promote recovery and personal growth through the disaster experience.

### *Outcomes*

- At the three month point it is too early to measure outcomes for individual households. Community capacity building has been enhanced with greater engagement and stronger support networks occurring with other agencies. Barnardos has built an exceptional relationship with St Vincent de Paul where previously the working relationship was more remote. This has come about through working together on the Mayor's Appeal Fund.
- Relationships with business houses have also been increased with many offering their assistance wherever necessary. For example, fire-affected people presenting at these business houses in need of financial assistance have been referred back to relevant agencies that may be able to assist.
- Barnardos' profile in the community has increased dramatically. The demographic affected by the bushfire is people who have mostly never sought assistance from welfare agencies in their life. They now have an appreciation of the services in their area and an understanding of the role the agency plays in the community.

John Lyons  
BSCS Coordinator  
14-22 John Street, Coonabarabran NSW 2357  
[johnlyons@warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au](mailto:johnlyons@warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au)

Catherine Wood  
Program Manager Barnardos / BSCS Support Worker  
Unit 2/2 Essex Street Coonabarabran NSW 2357  
[cwood@barnardos.org.au](mailto:cwood@barnardos.org.au)

Dr Allison Rowlands  
Director Disaster Welfare, MPES  
Level 2, Quad 1, 8 Parkview Drive, Sydney Olympic Park NSW 2128  
[allison.rowlands@mpes.nsw.gov.au](mailto:allison.rowlands@mpes.nsw.gov.au)

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Bushfire Support Coordination Service – Service Manual V1  
Appendix 2 Bushfire Support Coordination Service – Brochure

Appendix 1

**Warrumbungle**

**Bushfire Support Coordination Service**

**Service Manual**

**For Coordinator and Support Workers**

Date: February 2013

***The material in this Resource Kit is drawn from resources developed by the Earthquake Support Coordinator Service and the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service (established to support disaster affected individuals and households after the September 2010 Christchurch earthquake and the 2009 Victorian bushfires respectively). The NSW Government acknowledges and thanks the New Zealand, Victorian and Australian Governments and associated community organisations for the resources and advice provided to inform development of this kit.<sup>1</sup>***

---

<sup>1</sup> Though many resources were consulted, two publications were most heavily utilised: the Earthquake Support Co-ordinators Practice Guide including Operational Instructions (produced by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development and released in October 2012); and the Emergency Case Management Service Guide (published by the Department of Human Services, Victoria in 2011). Staff employed by the Bushfire Support Coordination Service can contact the NSW Ministry for Police and Emergency Services for further information.

## **Table of Contents**

1. <b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b>	146
1.1 Duration of Service	146
1.2 Governance	146
1.3 Data Collection and Reporting	147
1.4 Objectives of the BSCS	148
1.5 Principles of the Service	148
1.6 How it Works	148
1.7 Intended Outcomes	149
2. <b><u>THE PRACTICE APPROACH</u></b>	149
2.1 Strengths-Based and Solution Focussed Approach	150
2.2 Person-Centred Approach	150
3. <b><u>IMPACT OF BUSHFIRES ON EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING</u></b>	150
3.1 Grief and Loss	150
3.2 Short-term Responses	150
3.3 Medium-term Responses	151
3.4 Long-term Responses	151
3.5 Vulnerable Groups and Warning Signs	151
4. <b><u>INTERVENTION APPROACHES</u></b>	152
4.1 Working with People in the Aftermath of Disaster	152
4.2 Helping Someone who has Experienced a Traumatic Event	153
4.3 General Psychological Support in Relationship-Based Interventions	153
4.4 Individualised Support and a Focus on Communities	154
4.5 Focussing on Children and Young People	154
5. <b><u>BSCS SERVICE PROVISION</u></b>	154
5.1 Support Cycle	155
5.2 Initial Contact	155
5.3 Needs Assessment	156
5.4 The Recovery Plan and Review	156
5.5 Closure	156
6. <b><u>PRIVACY AND CONSENT</u></b>	157
7. <b><u>COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK</u></b>	157
7.1 Complaints about a BSCS staff member	157
7.2 Feedback	157



8. <u>WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY</u>	158
9. <u>PRACTICE SUPERVISION</u>	158
9.1 Group Supervision Roles	159
9.2 Group Supervision Process	159
10. <u>REFERENCES</u>	159
11. <u>OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES</u>	160
12. <u>APPENDICES</u>	161
12.1 Short Contact Form	162
12.2 Consent Form	163
12.3 First Visit Checklist	164
12.4 Intake Form	165
12.5 Needs Assessment Form	166
12.6 Recovery Plan	169
12.7 Progress Notes	171
12.8 Review Form	172
12.9 Closure Form	174
12.10 Resource List	176
12.11 Steering Committee Terms of Reference	182

## 1. INTRODUCTION

---

The Bushfire Support Coordination Service (BSCS) is a temporary service jointly funded by NSW and Commonwealth government under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, with Warrumbungle Shire Council providing in kind support. The BSCS is designed to help affected individuals, families and communities recover from the recent Warrumbungle bushfires. The BSCS supplements the existing human services system in the district to meet additional demand, provide extended (out of hours) service and ensure that individuals, households and primary producers who have experienced significant loss can access trained support workers. The BSCS is an outreach service that offers a single point of contact to help service users navigate and access the range of services they may require.

Over the coming months, those who have experienced significant loss as a result of the fire face major decisions about the future and will experience a range of emotions including intense and prolonged stress. The BSCS is designed to strengthen individual/household capability to meet bushfire recovery needs, assist in decision-making and promote wellbeing.

### **1.1 Duration of Service**

The BSCS is funded for an initial period of six months and will be extended as deemed necessary by a review and assessment of need. The decision to cease the service will be made by MPES based on recommendations of the BSCS Coordinator and the Steering Committee.

The BSCS will not cease operation until appropriate transition plans have been created for service users requiring ongoing support.

### **1.2 Governance**

#### *Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (MPES)*

MPES is responsible for funding the BSCS. The BSCS Coordinator reports to the Director Disaster Welfare on a regular basis about the operation of the service and outcomes achieved.

MPES will report to Government and NSW Treasury on BSCS activities, allocation of funds and outcomes of the service.

#### *BSCS Steering Committee*

The BSCS Steering Committee is the local expert panel established to drive development, implementation and monitoring of the service. The Steering Committee is responsible for guiding the BSCS and associated service delivery, policies, programs and tools.

The BSCS Steering Committee will provide advice about local service systems and expertise on implementation of the service. This committee will also participate in the final review of the BSCS.

#### *Human Services Sub Committee and Recovery Committee*

The BSCS Coordinator is a member of the Recovery Committee and is the chair person of the Human Services Sub Committee. These committees do not have a role in determining BSCS service direction, but will provide a valuable information sharing opportunity for the Coordinator.

It is imperative that the BSCS Coordinator as the chair of the Human Services Sub-Committee only actions items from this committee that are directly related to, or within the parameters of the BSCS role.

## Staffing Structure

The BSCS staff will consist of a Bushfire Support Coordinator and Bushfire Support Workers sourced from local human services agencies.

The Coordinator's role is to manage the overall functioning of the Bushfire Support Coordination Service and associated team (in partnership with key agencies).

The Coordinator's key responsibilities are:

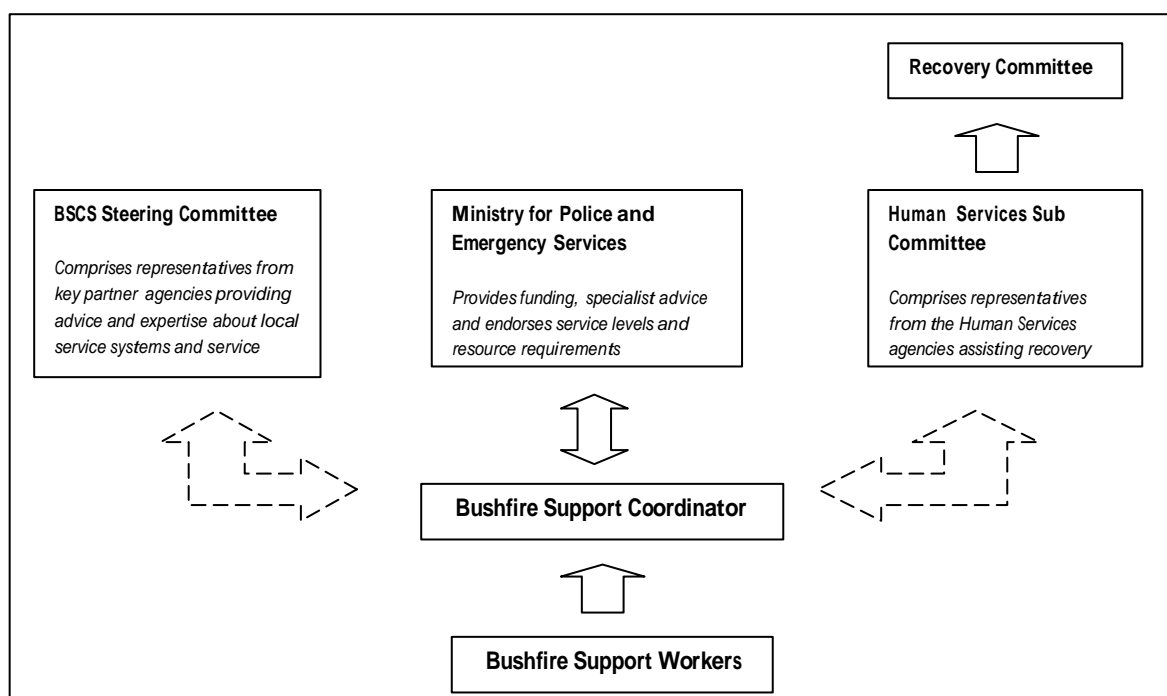
- Coordination of and supervision of the support workers
- Establishing service procedures, systems and tools and monitor their implementation Service promotion to ensure availability and ease of access for service users Maintaining data collection and storage
- Facilitating stakeholder relationships
- Reporting to MPES and the Steering Committee
- Membership of Recovery Committee and Human Services Sub Committee
- Balancing coordination responsibilities with direct service provision.

The Support Worker's role is to facilitate quality support services to service users through effective and collaborative relationships, comprehensive needs assessments, provision of timely and accurate information, individualised bushfire recovery planning and program evaluation.

The Support Worker's key responsibilities are:

- Initiating contact with service users in a timely manner
- Working with service users and connecting them to appropriate agencies and services
- Collecting relevant data from service users
- Reporting to the Coordinator about service delivery.

### Flow of Information



### 1.3 Data Collection and Reporting

All staff members are required to collect data from each service user. The Coordinator is responsible for maintaining the database of this information for which a template will be provided. The data collected will include but is not limited to:

- The number, profile and duration of service users accessing the BSCS
- The reasons for contact/referral to the BSCS
- What service/s was provided
- The outcome of the services provided.

A monthly report will be provided to the Director Disaster Welfare and the Steering Committee by the Coordinator that includes data about service usage and trends as well as staff activities and any issues that have arisen.

The Coordinator will report immediately to the Director Disaster Welfare in the event of any contentious issues eg. complaints against staff or the service.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the BSCS**

The BSCS objectives are to:

- Offer an individualised, relationship-based service that seeks to support and empower individuals, strengthening their capacity over time
- Offer this service based on assessment and agreed goals with the service user according to their preferences
- Facilitate and work with the service user to engage with services, seek financial assistance or information where they find it difficult to navigate the range of services/grants/loans available
- Provide support; co-ordinate with appropriate agencies for immediate needs; provide information; work with people to assess and assist with referral and application processes for required services.

#### **1.5 Principles of the Service**

The BSCS model is predicated on several key principles:

- One service across multiple providers the BSCS draws on the skills of both government and non-governmental community-based human services agencies working collaboratively
- The service is free, voluntary and accessible all those who have experienced distress, significant losses and trauma should have access to support to assist in their recovery process
- Service delivery is locally-driven trained workers in local human service agencies are best placed to offer this service
- The service is supported the service is coordinated locally and support is provided by Warrumbungle Shire Council, State and Commonwealth Governments
- The service is securely linked into the broader recovery processes for the community the BSCS is represented on the Recovery Committee and the Human Services Sub Committee
- Service delivery is flexible and responsive and provides continuity of care though the BSCS is of finite duration, the supportive relationships formed will assist long-term recovery
- A commitment to high quality service delivery the service seeks to provide services of the highest standard.

#### **1.6 How it Works**

The BSCS offers free support and information to individuals and households impacted by the bushfire. The BSCS is delivered by a team of Bushfire Support Workers who are employed, managed by, and based in their respective agencies, while working collaboratively as a BSCS team.

Support Workers are trained local human services workers with skills in support work, case work or broader welfare work. They are led by a Coordinator, with support, training, quality assurance, specialist advice, supervision and orientation to bushfire-specific issues provided.

An individual or household needing support is assigned a Support Worker with the skills and expertise to appraise their needs. They will meet in venues familiar to the user, such as their home, workplace or a familiar community space.

A Support Worker can:

- Provide relevant information about the range of assistance and services available
- Help service users work out what needs to be done and develop an action plan
- Connect service users with the services required and assist in coordinating these
- Assist with referral and application processes for services needed
- Facilitate meetings between service users and relevant agencies
- Assist with practicalities, such as dealing with insurance companies or replacing key documents.

The BSCS is a flexible system, ranging from facilitating self-access to information, to providing intensive support for individuals and households who may be temporarily unable to independently access the services they need for recovery. The focus is on empowering the service users.

Support Workers will build a supportive ongoing relationship with service users rather than providing a therapeutic or clinical counselling service. Service users that require this form of intervention can be referred to existing services with this expertise. Support Workers may provide supportive counselling as required.

The BSCS will be widely promoted – in brochures (distributed at the Recovery Centre and via outreach), through websites (including the Warrumbungle Shire Council and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services), at Council, community centres, local community agencies, general practitioners and at community meetings. Individuals and households can access the service by visiting the Recovery Centre, by contacting the Warrumbungle Shire Council and by referral through government agencies and community organisations.

### **1.7 Intended Outcomes**

The BSCS is designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Service users know where to seek support when required
- Service users navigate, access and engage appropriate recovery services
- An individualised, relationship-based and responsive service is provided
- The specialist skills, reputation and existing capacity of local community agencies are harnessed
- Communities are supported in ways that promote resilience and self sufficiency
- Individuals, households and communities value and benefit from the service received.

## **2. THE PRACTICE APPROACH**

---

The BSCS is different to many community-based services in the human services sector in that service users that may approach or be referred to the BSCS may not have used a community or welfare service previously. They may have, up until the bushfire, had no need for support in managing crises and loss in their families.

The BSCS aims to promote individual strengths and recovery in a non-labelling, non-pathologising way. When a service user has gained the support needed in negotiating the rebuilding of homes and family life after this event, it is appropriate that the BSCS withdraws from the family and terminates intervention.

## **2.1 Strengths-Based and Solution Focussed Approach**

A strengths-based and solution-focused approach requires the worker to identify the service user's strengths, talents, capabilities and resources. A focus on strengths should be maintained throughout all phases of intervention. Once strengths are identified, the worker can encourage the service user to develop and use them to work on particular goals and tasks in the recovery process.

Systemic ideas originating in cybernetic theory are useful in assisting the worker understand patterns in interaction which can explain problems in terms of relationships rather than individual characteristics or pathology.

## **2.2 Person-Centred Approach**

The BSCS uses a person-centred approach. It is based on engaging the service user, encouraging and supporting him/her to take an active part in planning, implementing and reviewing the recovery plan they develop with the worker.

The person-centred approach incorporates the following ideas:

- the service user has autonomy and choice to express their needs and make their own decisions
- the service user's values are respected and their dignity is maintained
- the service user's social and cultural identity is respected in a sensitive way
- the service user is supported to identify their goals and work towards achieving them
- the service user and the BSCS are partners in the process
- clear and open communication is used
- the approach is flexible, dynamic and individually tailored
- the service user and the BSCS have realistic, achievable goals, and any unrealistic expectations are clarified early in the relationship.

## **3. THE IMPACT OF BUSHFIRES ON EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELLBEING**

---

The impact of exposure to natural disasters such as bushfires on an individual's psychosocial wellbeing can be mild or severe; short term or long lasting. People's responses will also change over time.

### **3.1 Grief and Loss**

Grief is the normal, natural and inevitable response to loss and it can affect every part of our life. When people grieve they are coming to terms with what has changed in their lives. Everyone grieves differently - some people are open and expressive with their grief, crying, and wanting to talk, whilst others are more private and may be reluctant to talk and prefer to keep busy. It is important to be respectful of individual grieving processes.

(Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement. *About Grief*.)

[http://www.grief.org.au/grief\\_and\\_bereavement\\_support/understanding\\_grief/about\\_grief](http://www.grief.org.au/grief_and_bereavement_support/understanding_grief/about_grief))

### **3.2 Short-term responses (days to weeks)**

In the days following a disaster, people (including children) may have difficulty with planning, decision making, setting priorities or anticipating future needs. They may feel numb, shocked, disoriented, confused or uncertain about the future. Emotional reactions may be postponed or displaced onto seemingly unimportant things. There may be significant difficulty thinking and remembering. Great emphasis is often given to meeting immediate physical and material needs, at the expense of self-care and long-term planning. There can be considerable strain placed on families as a result of the range of emotions and reactions from the bushfires.

### **3.3 Medium-term responses (weeks to months)**

In the weeks and months after the disaster, children, young people and adults of all ages may go through a wide range of emotions, including intense distress, fear, grief, sadness, anger, uncertainty and insecurity about the future. There are also strong feelings of altruism, togetherness and concern. It is a time of intense, changing emotions.

People react strongly to political or other community events. There is a tendency for emotions to be expressed via practical problems or other events in their lives, including blaming those providing services for things over which they have no control.

People are often overloaded or in a state of constant distress for many months in the recovery period. Health may deteriorate, accidents increase and relationships become tense. Often these problems develop slowly without those concerned noticing because of their preoccupation with more pressing events. The family unit may experience considerable burden during this time as different members respond in their own way to recovery.

As disasters do not impact people in an equitable fashion, people can experience jealousy, rivalry and changes in friendship networks. Misunderstanding and confusion are common, together with doubt and scepticism about who and what can be trusted and accepted.

### **3.4 Long-term responses (months to years)**

Some of the disaster's effects only become obvious after a year or longer. These can involve: economic hardship; the effects of living under stress for a long period; poor health; depression; relationship problems; developmental, academic and behavioural problems in children; loss of leisure activities and recreation; loss of friendship networks; loss of a sense of direction in life; and continuing disturbing memories of the disaster.

Adults and children may feel isolated from friends and family because continuing consequences of the disaster are not understood. The community may have undergone changes and so no longer feels the same as the community they once knew, which can lead to feeling isolated at home as well.

Many aspects of social, marital and family life that may have been postponed because of other demands in the early recovery period may now come to the fore, often in the form of crises.

Conversely, a disaster experience also sees many people gaining new or increased wisdom or understanding, positive shifts in priorities for their lifestyle and value system, and new or strengthened coping skills that will help them in their future lives.

### **3.5 Vulnerable groups and warning signs**

People with pre-existing mental health stresses or problems may experience new or increased symptoms, or possible relapses. The stress of direct involvement in the bushfires may act as a trigger for a relapse of serious mental illness. The often explicit and broad coverage of the bushfires in the media may impact negatively on people with pre-existing vulnerabilities, and potentially cause levels of distress for those without mental illness.

Mental health impacts are also often associated with an increase in problematic alcohol and drug use, violence and abuse and this is sometimes an early warning sign of more serious mental health problems emerging. Increased alcohol and drug use as part of a coping strategy can also lead to mental health difficulties.

Table 1 provides a summary of the World Health Organization’s estimates of the anticipated increase in mental health problems following a disaster.

**Table 1 Summary of WHO predictions of the prevalence of psychosocial problems after an emergency**

	Before emergency – 12-month prevalence	After emergency – 12-month prevalence
Severe mental disorder (such as psychosis, severe depression, severe disabling anxiety disorder)	2–3%	3–4%
Mild or moderate mental disorder (such as mild and moderate depression or anxiety)	10%	20% (reduces to 15% with natural recovery)
Moderate or severe psychological/ social distress (no formal disorder but severe distress)	No estimate	Large percentage (reduces due to natural recovery)
Mild psychological/ social distress	No estimate	Small percentage (increases over time)

Adapted from van Ommeren, 2006<sup>4</sup>

Victorian Department of Human Services (2009) *After the Bushfires: Victoria's psychosocial recovery framework*.

#### 4. INTERVENTION APPROACHES

---

##### 4.1 Working with People in the Aftermath of Disaster

Traumatic experiences are distressing and threatening, and may be so intense as to temporarily disrupt a person’s ability to come to terms with them. Thinking you might die, seeing others injured, intense fear, abuse or being forced to do things out of your control are all traumatic experiences. While traumatic events occur all the time, they generally only affect a few people. The reactions of those affected often cause people close to them to be confused and unsure about what to expect or how to help. Traumatized people can respond in ways that may seem unusual or make things worse for themselves—or they may be concerned about things that seem unreasonable.

A traumatic experience can temporarily shatter basic assumptions about life or other people, such as trust, safety and predictability. The feelings caused may be so intense that for some people, unlike normal distress, they do not fade with time, but continue or get worse.

People who have experienced a traumatic event may:

- feel fear even when it is quite safe
- be constantly on edge and not respond to normal reassurance or opportunities to relax  
be extremely tired, which may continue for much longer than seems reasonable
- have periods of appearing numb or detached, and not want contact, which may be followed by overexcited behaviour and a need to cling to family or familiar things
- feel they failed or did the wrong thing at the time (even if this is not true)
- remember a combination of very intense fragments of the event which do not go away, combined with important memory gaps that make them feel uncertain about what really happened.

Most people recover from traumatic experiences, but it usually takes them longer than would be expected for non-traumatic crises. Commonly, an individual experiences an initial period of several days where they have strong emotions of fear or distress, and a constant preoccupation with the events. Many people then feel a need to get back to normal and put it out of their minds. Although this can often be beneficial in the short term and help recovery from normal crises, it often only postpones problems for people who have been through traumatic events. Some people who have experienced a traumatic event will maintain normal routines for some time, although those around them often see that all is not well. However subsequently something happens that brings it to the surface again. This can happen months after the event.



## **4.2 Helping Someone who has Experienced a Traumatic Event**

- Spend time with the person, without judging or demanding. Their recovery will occur in its own time
- Offer support and a listening ear. Talking is one of the best things they can do to work things out—but they may need to go over things many more times than you expect. Try to be interested in what they want to say. Avoid giving advice or trying to solve the problems. The talking itself is important and helps to make the traumatic experience fade
- Help with practical tasks and chores—this allows more of their energy and time to be given to the recovery process
- Give them time, space and patience. Don't take it personally if at times they are irritable, bad tempered or want to be alone. These are natural parts of the stress response and will pass as they recover
- Don't try to talk them out of their reactions, minimise the event or say things like 'You're lucky it wasn't worse', or 'Pull yourself together', or try to get them to look on the bright side. Stressed people need to concentrate on themselves at first. They will feel supported if you let them know you are concerned, want to help and are trying to understand. They will see your viewpoint as they recover.

Given access to information and advice about possible coping strategies, most people can manage their own affairs. Sometimes it is important for people to know when their own recovery activity requires additional help. Personal recovery may need the support of specialist knowledge to ensure stress does not linger unnecessarily or lead to later health problems. Stress problems respond rapidly with professional advice and information. Indicators that specialist support may be required include:

- recovery has stalled or does not seem to be proceeding
- physical or other symptoms cause concern
- relationships are affected by the stress
- continuing emotional numbness, depression or anxiety
- continued disturbed sleep and nightmares
- the person cannot handle the intense feelings or physical sensations
- the person becomes accident prone or increases their use of drugs or alcohol.

## **4.3 General Psychological Support in Relationship-Based Interventions**

- Exploring and acknowledging experiences and feelings – listening
- Acknowledging fear, distress and suffering – expression of empathy
- Assessing any specific stress and ability to cope; degree of social support available; potential referrals
- Reinforcing coping strategies and skills – to facilitate mastery over the experience; promote expectations of making own decisions; encouraging adequate rest; providing psychoeducation regarding the natural process of recovery
- Facilitating the working through of feelings – opportunities to ventilate; listening skills and normalisation
- Promoting family adaptation – opportunities for family members to talk together and also with other families
- Facilitating network and community adjustment – reconnecting with social networks; discussing shared stress; or enabling the individual to join a network, attend relevant meetings and ensure access to updated information about the recovery.

Raphael, B. (1986) *When Disaster Strikes: how individuals and communities cope with catastrophe*. NY: Basic Books.

#### **4.4 Individualised Support and a Focus on Communities**

Disasters start a process that everyone involved in the recovery program must understand in order to be effective. Community recovery is the essential basis for personal, individual recovery. Accordingly, support services should be based around two key elements:

- *individualised support for people and families* – information, support, access to generic services and facilitating provision of specialist services
- *focus on communities* – support for existing community agencies to identify and respond to the needs of their members in ways that promote recovery and social cohesion.

#### **4.5 Focussing on Children and Young People**

It is important to ensure that when establishing our service response we do not neglect the specific needs of children and young people.

The importance of family and community support in helping children and young people overcome the impact of their experiences cannot be overstated. However, it is also important to ensure that the broader service system is responsive to their needs – and does not just assume that what works for adults will also work for children and youth.

Based on previous events, we know that the impact of a bushfire on children will depend on:

- How close the fire is to home
- How the child's parents and carers respond
- The child's temperament
- Whether they were apart from their parents at the time of the fire
- Family support – being apart increases anxiety
- How much they see on the media – repeated and vivid images on television can confuse young children because it can seem like the fire is being repeated over and over and that they are very close when they are not
- Whether children have personal losses such as loss of a family member or friend, if their home is burnt and their whole life disrupted, or loss of a loved pet (there is the grief related to the losses and also fears of what will happen in the future)
- The child's age – younger children in particular may be affected because they don't fully understand what is happening and what they imagine may be even more frightening than the reality.

### **5. BSCS SERVICE PROVISION**

---

The BSCS team performs their duties in a complex space which includes navigating housing, physical health, mental/psychological health, material aid and financial systems. They have the professional confidence to make a substantial contribution to assisting service users reach their individual recovery goals.

Support Workers provide a comprehensive range of practical assessment, referral and co-ordination services to help service users with relocation problems and other issues identified. This is achieved by providing support and assistance and facilitating timely and coordinated access and referral to information/support services.

The range of services that individuals and families may need help to access includes, but is not limited to:

- financial assistance/advice
- public health information/support
- insurance and legal advice

- accommodation and housing services
- material aid information
- medical/medicine services
- school/childcare services
- clean-up and restoration information/support services
- employment services/training and vocational placements disability
- support services
- personal support and counselling
- business information/support services.

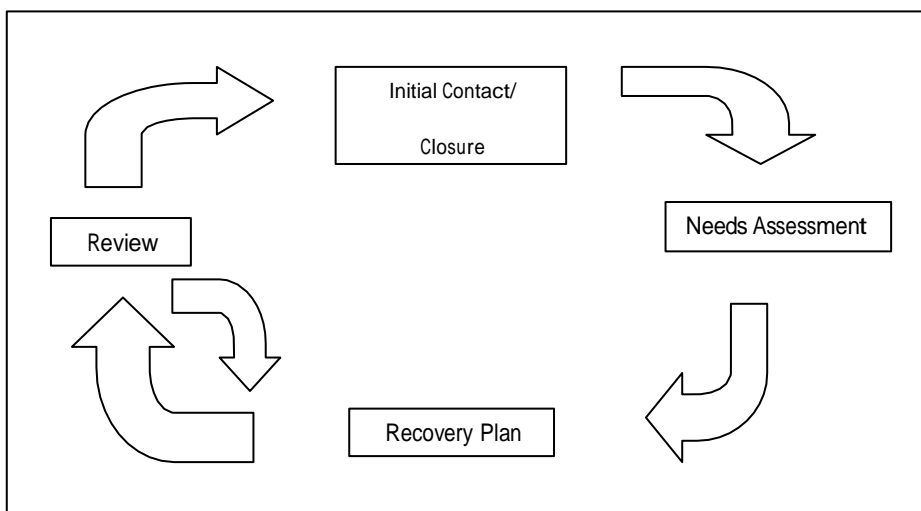
Some information should be provided about what the BSCS cannot do. For example, the BSCS:

- will not become involved in grants approvals or appeals processes (but can assist the household to gain information about the processes)
- cannot provide technical advice about building
- cannot provide expert advice about bushfire preparedness or safety cannot resolve every issue
- does not provide therapeutic or clinical counselling.

Managing expectations about the BSCS at an early stage is very important. During the initial contact it is important to discuss with the service user what they expect from being involved with the service. Then the Support Worker should explain to the service user what is realistically possible within the timeframe.

Some service users may already be engaged with other support services when they present to the BSCS. The support provided by these services is expected to continue alongside the support provided by the BSCS. At no time is it expected that a service user cease contact with an already engaged service to become involved with the BSCS.

### **5.1 Support Cycle**



### **5.2 Initial contact**

During the first conversation, the service users should be informed that the:

- BSCS is voluntary and free of charge
- BSCS is confidential
- BSCS involvement can cease at any time, and the service user is in control of this process
- BSCS can assist with referrals to other services

- Length of service involvement depends on the needs of the service user, though initial funding is for 6 months
- The service model is based on strengthening the service user, so that they can move forward in their lives independently.

There will be some service users that do not need ongoing support from the BSCS and only require one-off support. When only a brief intervention is required, a short contact form should be completed to record basic demographic and service provision details (see appendix 1).

A consent form should be completed by the service user when required (see appendix 2).

### **5.3 Needs Assessment**

A comprehensive and thorough assessment of the service user's current situation is required for ongoing service provision, including the service user's strengths, abilities, needs and available resources. A needs assessment is started at the first visit and may be built on at each subsequent visit, in order to understand the service user's needs and priorities (see appendix 5).

Completing the needs assessment with the service user will produce a comprehensive picture of their environment, the urgency and the priority of their issues.

A thorough needs assessment is completed when:

- The service user is engaged and openly shares information
- Enough information is gathered for decision making
- There is a clear picture of the service user's strengths
- It is clear which service providers or resources are best suited to assist the service user
- An effective recovery plan can be created from the information gathered.

### **5.4 The Recovery Plan and Review**

Conducting a needs assessment first will assist in analysing the information gathered about the service user, identifying key issues, and considering what needs to be done to progress the work. The recovery plan will then identify the services and resources that may be engaged to best meet the service user's needs.

Once a service user is engaged with the BSCS and the needs assessment is complete, a recovery plan can be developed. The purpose of developing and reviewing a recovery plan regularly is to ensure that the needs of the service user have been identified correctly, as well as ensuring that the ongoing work is purposeful and addressing the outstanding needs and issues (see appendix 6).

The service user's needs will not remain steady and are expected to change over time, thereby necessitating frequent consideration and review of the recovery plan (see appendix 8).

### **5.5 Closure**

The BSCS ceasing support with a service user should be a planned event and BSCS should discuss any impending closure with the service user in the context of achieving the goals and progressing through the recovery plan. Most often, the decision to cease service provision will come directly from a review of the recovery plan that identifies that all goals have been met. At this time, a short closure survey will record the service user's and support worker's opinions about the effectiveness of the BSCS (see appendix 9).

If at any time the service user wishes to cease their involvement with BSCS, closure should occur.

All service users should be made aware that they can contact the BSCS at any time after closure if required.

If there are any ongoing support needs for a service user at the time that the BSCS ceases operation, a transition or referral to an appropriate ongoing service is required and a plan for this must be made with the service user.

## **6. PRIVACY AND CONSENT**

---

A service user's personal information must be protected according to the Support Worker's home agency's privacy and confidentiality policies and relevant legislation. It is vital that service users understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and privacy and that they have the opportunity to discuss any questions that come up. Support Workers should advise the service user that at any point throughout the involvement with the BSCS they can withdraw their consent and/or alter the information-sharing process to meet their own requirements.

If a service user is legally unable to make decisions, the service should be undertaken at the request, and with the informed consent of, the service user's proxy decision maker.

## **7. COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK**

---

People affected by the bushfires have experienced a traumatic and stressful event. Complaints and feedback to the BSCS should be handled sensitively to reduce the likelihood of further harm or distress.

Service users who wish to make a complaint may raise it with any staff member of BSCS. All complaints received must be handled in accordance with the worker's home agency's policies and must be forwarded to the Coordinator who will make a decision about who is best placed to deal with the complaint.

Concerns or complaints may relate to decisions or actions taken by other agencies. The BSCS worker can assist the service user to make their complaint or raise their issue directly with that agency.

### **7.1 Complaints about a BSCS staff member**

Responsibility: Bushfire Support Coordinator and home agency

Staff members work under the Code of Conduct of their home agency. Any complaints relating to a staff member are dealt with by the staff member's manager in their home agency.

After clarification that the service user's complaint relates to a staff member, the Coordinator takes details of the complaint and contacts the staff member's home manager to discuss the issues. The staff member's home manager makes their own investigation and makes a decision based on their Code of Conduct. This decision is then relayed to the Coordinator. Any action is the responsibility of the home manager.

### **7.2 Feedback**

Support Workers should encourage and welcome feedback from individuals, so that they feel confident about discussing their needs and concerns. The concept of service users providing regular feedback directly to the Support Worker should be introduced early in the relationship. Support Workers should

explain that all feedback—positive or otherwise—helps improve the service offered to them personally, but that it also ensures that the BSCS effectively supports the recovery of all those affected by the bushfire.

When a service user discusses an issue, the staff member should engage them by asking about their concerns and offering options to improve the service. Staff should check with the service user to ensure they are clear about the concern and that the solution offered can improve the situation.

Regular questions to encourage feedback:

- How do you think we are going—do you feel we are making progress?
- Is there anything that is worrying you about me working with you or your family?
- Is there anything you would like me to spend more time on?

Possible responses to negative feedback:

- Thank you for telling me. It's important to me that we discuss these issues together
- It is really important for you to tell me these things, because I want to make sure you get the services that you need
- What do you think I could do to make this issue work better for you? Would you like to speak with the Coordinator?

The complaints and feedback process is also used to identify trends in issues or practice that need to be addressed. Feedback can assist in developing solutions to identified issues and suggest practice or systems improvements within BSCS, or the recovery process more broadly.

## **8. WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY**

---

Personal safety is the priority for all BSCS team members. In case of an emergency call 000 and follow emergency procedures.

When conducting visits with service users, usual safety protocols within your home agency should apply e.g. having a mobile phone, informing your home agency's line manager and /or the Coordinator when you are undertaking a home visit, and texting them when the visit has been successfully completed.

Workers will exercise normal care and alertness in undertaking your duties. Always terminate a visit at any time if you feel unsafe and contact the Coordinator.

Report all injuries, accidents and incidents through your home agency's line management and the Coordinator.

## **9. PRACTICE SUPERVISION**

---

Support Workers will continue to receive regular individual supervision by their home agency's line manager as per the home agency's guidelines.

Group supervision, in the form of case discussions, will provide an opportunity for all staff of the BSCS to come together. This process will provide Support Workers with an opportunity for shared experiences, emotional support, solution building to same or similar challenges, prevention of stress and reduction of the impact of stress by direct discussions. This is particularly pertinent in a service such as the BSCS where the Support Workers and Coordinator perform most of their duties independently and the opportunity for discussion is limited.

Group supervision will also serve as the primary means by which BSCS practice is developed and strengthened.

It is expected that group supervision sessions will be held with all staff members on a monthly basis facilitated by an external clinical worker through NSW Health when available.

### **9.1 Group Supervision Roles**

For each group supervision session the following roles need to be allocated:

- Facilitator – responsible for managing the group’s timing, direction and ensuring there is a safe and containing space for discussion. No note taking is required
- Presenter – responsible for choosing an issue from their practice that is interesting, challenging or concerning and preparing a presentation of this issue for the group.

### **9.2 Group Supervision Process**

- The presenter is to present their issue to the group, including any relevant background information to ensure all members of the group have all the information required for discussion of the issue
- The facilitator asks the presenter what the purpose or focus of the session is, or what they hope to achieve from the discussion.
- Other group members are to pay close attention to how the issue is framed, how the presenter sounds and what words are used during the presentation and discuss this
- Group members are encouraged to discuss what has caught their attention rather than offer practical solutions, and sit with uncertainty and look at the situation from their own or other’s perspectives. The presenter is not to correct any “false leads” by the group
- When the presenter rejoins the group, they may comment on what caught their attention from the group’s discussion
- By the end of the session, the presenter should have more ideas and perspectives that will inform subsequent action.

## **10. REFERENCES**

---

Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement. *About Grief*.

[http://www.grief.org.au/grief\\_and\\_bereavement\\_support/understanding\\_grief/about\\_grief](http://www.grief.org.au/grief_and_bereavement_support/understanding_grief/about_grief)

Department of Health (2000) *Assessing children in need and their families: practice guidance*.

<http://open.gov.uk/doh/quality.htm>

Lohrbach, S. (2008) *Group supervision in child protection practice*. Social Work Now.

New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (2012) *Earthquake Support Co-ordinators Practice Guide including Operational Instructions*.

Raphael, B. (1986) *When Disaster Strikes: how individuals and communities cope with catastrophe*. NY: Basic Books.

Reder P and Duncan S (1999) *Lost Innocents*. Routledge, London.

Victorian Department of Human Services (2009) *After the Bushfires: Victoria's psychosocial recovery framework*. [www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth)

Victorian Department of Human Services (2011) *Emergency Case Management Service Guide*.

## 11. OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

---

### Group Supervision:

Lohrbach S and Sawyer R. *Creating a Constructive Practice: Family and Professional Partnership in High-Risk Child Protection Case Conferences*. *Protection Children* (v. 19).

### Recovering from Disasters:

American Psychological Association (2011). *Managing Traumatic Stress: Tips for recovering from disasters and other traumatic events*. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>

Gordon R (2004). *Summary: Disaster Social Process Theory from Community process and the recovery environment following emergency*. *Environmental Health* (v. 4).  
[http://www.psychology.org.nz/cms\\_show\\_download.php?id=1265](http://www.psychology.org.nz/cms_show_download.php?id=1265)

Lifeline. *Recovering after a natural disaster*. <http://www.lifeline.org.au/Get-Help/Facts---Information/Recovering-after-a-natural-disaster/Recovering-after-a-natural-disaster>

### Self Care:

National Association of Social Workers (2008). *Professional self-care and social work*. *Social Work Speaks*.  
<http://www.socialworkers.org/nasw/memberlink/2009/supportfiles/ProfesionalSelf-Care.pdf>

Williams I, Richardson T, Moore D, Gambrel L and Keeling M (2010). *Perspectives on self-care*. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* (v. 5).  
[http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/lib100056/reading\\_williams.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/lib100056/reading_williams.pdf)

### Strengths-Based Practice:

Hammond W (2010). *Principles of strengths-based practice*. *Resiliency Initiatives*.  
<http://www.ayscbc.org/Principles%20of%20Strength-2.pdf>

Saleebey D (2000). *Power in the people: Strengths and hope*. *Advances in Social Work* (v.1).  
[http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/LCPhaseV/Dennis\\_Saleebey\\_Article.pdf](http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/docs/LCPhaseV/Dennis_Saleebey_Article.pdf)

Durrant M (2008). *Solution-focussed brief therapy in child and adolescent mental health contexts*. Brief Therapy Institute of Sydney — Brief Solutions Pty Ltd.

### Vicarious Trauma:

Morrison Z (2007). *'Feeling Heavy': Vicarious trauma and other issues facing those that work in the sexual assault field*. *ACSSA Wrap* (v. 4). [http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/wrap/acssa\\_wrap4.pdf](http://www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/pubs/wrap/acssa_wrap4.pdf)

Trippany R (2004). *Preventing Vicarious Trauma: What counsellors should know when working with trauma survivors*. *Journal of Counseling & Development* (v. 82).  
[http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/lib100056/reading\\_trippany.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/lib100056/reading_trippany.pdf)



1. Short Contact Form	162
2. Consent Form	163
3. First visit check list	164
4. Intake Form	165
5. Needs Assessment Form	166
6. Recovery Plan	169
7. Progress Notes	171
8. Review Form	172
9. Closure Form	174
10. Resource List	176
11. Steering Committee Terms of Reference	182

**Short Contact Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Referred by \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Household Members and Significant Others:</b>					
First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service user	Indigenous Status/Ethnicity
				primary service user	

<b>Household Contact Details:</b>		
Primary Language spoken:		
Mobile 1:	Mobile 2:	Landline:
Email address:		
Emergency affected address:		
Current residential address:		

Reason for referral: what assistance does the person need and why?

---



---



---



---



---

Outcome: What did you do?

---



---



---



---



---

Support Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Bushfire Support Coordination Service**

**Consent Form**

I \_\_\_\_\_ give authority/consent to my  
(name)

Bushfire Support Worker

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of bushfire support worker)

to make contact on my behalf with the organisations indicated below, regarding any assistance which may be appropriate for my circumstances, or for which I have applied.

**Organisations**

- Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP – Centrelink)
- Australian Tax Office (ATO)
- Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- Office of State Revenue
- NSW Disaster Assistance Grant (Welfare Services)
- NSW Disaster Assistance Grant (Rural Assistance Authority)
- Australian Insurance Council
- Australian Red Cross
- Mayor’s Bushfire Appeal Home Dislocation Payment Offer
- Other (please specify): .....

I also agree for the Bushfire Support Coordination Service to remain in contact with me over related matters.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

## First Visit Checklist

<b>Information</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Completed?</b> <i>(Tick when complete)</i>
Consent Form	<i>Have you explained the consent issues?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Has the service user signed the form?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initial information	<i>Have you discussed what they expect from being involved with the Bushfire Support Coordination Service?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Have you explained what the service and you as a support worker can and cannot do?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Needs assessment	<i>Have you completed a Needs Assessment form and identified and agreed on a recovery plan?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recovery information	<i>Have you gone through available recovery information?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Have you helped, or made plans to help to apply for assistance, including grants?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complaints and feedback policy	<i>Have you explained the complaints and feedback policy to the service user?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact information	<i>Have you left your personal and your agency contact details?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please note that some of these actions may be completed over the first several visits.

## Intake Form

### FAMILY DETAILS:

Household Members and Significant Others:					
First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service user	Indigenous Status/Ethnicity
				primary service user	

Household Contact Details:		
Primary Language spoken:		
Mobile 1:	Mobile 2:	Landline:
Email address:		
Emergency affected address:		
Current residential address:		

### CURRENT SERVICE INVOLVEMENT DETAILS

Service Name	Contact Person	Contact Details	Reason for involvement

### Reason for referral to the Bushfire Support Coordination Service:

--

Support Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Needs Assessment Form

### Details of household members:

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service user
				primary service user

### Contact Details:

Mobile 1:	Mobile 2:	Landline:
Email address:		
Emergency affected address		
Current residential address		

### Service User Needs or Requirements

*Include information on accommodation, financial assistance, grants, material aid, food, identification documents, legal assistance, insurance issues.*

### Household Needs or Requirements

*Include information on asbestos removal, utilities, dam water replacement, water tank maintenance, tree removal, rubbish removal, domestic re-fencing, storage, amenities and property surveying.*

## Employment Needs or Requirements

*Include information on employment assistance, training/retraining options;*

*primary production/business needs: animal welfare, fodder, farming, boundary fencing, business issues.*

## Health and Family Needs or Requirements

*Include information on disabilities, medical conditions, aged care, childcare, school/education, children/adolescent issues, parenting support, pet welfare, holiday/leisure concerns.*

**Emotional/Social Needs or Requirements**

*Include information on trauma/grief and loss concerns, stress and anger management, mental health, relationship issues, AOD issues, formal and informal support networks.*

**Other information:**



## Recovery Plan

(A copy is to be provided to the service user)

**Details of household members:**

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service User	Contact details
				primary service user	

**What is/are the overall goal(s) for the individual/family/household:**

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Task: What needs to be done?	Responsibility: Who is responsible for doing this task?	Proposed timeframes: What is a realistic timeframe to achieve this task?

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Task: What needs to be done?	Responsibility: Who is responsible for doing this task?	Proposed timeframes: What is a realistic timeframe to achieve this task?

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Task: What needs to be done?	Responsibility: Who is responsible for doing this task?	Proposed timeframes: What is a realistic timeframe to achieve this task?

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed review periods for this agreement (e.g. weekly/fortnightly):

\_\_\_\_\_

Support Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_



## Review Form

**Details of household members:**

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service User	Contact details
				primary service user	

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Achieved

Partly Achieved

Not yet achieved

**Comments:**

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Achieved

Partly Achieved

Not yet achieved

**Comments:**

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Achieved

Partly Achieved

Not yet achieved

**Comments:**

**Outcome:**

Continue support

Finalise support

Support Worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Closure Form

**Details of household members:**

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Gender	Relationship to Primary Service User	Contact details
				primary service user	

**Brief Referral Reason:**

**Reason for Closure:**

- Service met the needs of the service user       Service user ended contact with the service
- Service unable to meet the needs of service user    Service user moved out of the area

Service Name	Assistance provided

**Service User's Evaluation of Service:**

Satisfied     
  Partially satisfied     
  Dissatisfied     
  Unknown

Comments:

**Support Worker Evaluation of Service:**

Satisfied     
  Partially satisfied     
  Dissatisfied     
  Other

Comments:

**Service users agreeing to closure:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Support Worker:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **RESOURCE LIST**

### **HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY/INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**

#### **Asbestos**

Houses built before 1988 may contain asbestos in walls, ceilings, roofs, pipes, electrical conduits and eaves. If you suspect you may have asbestos on your residence register with the Coonabarabran Recovery Centre on 68 422 951.

For more information about asbestos ring Rosalie Mayo-Ramsey (Workcover), State Coordinator of Asbestos and Demolition on 0412 462 997.

#### **Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment**

The Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment is a one-off payment of \$1000 for eligible adults and \$400 for each child. It is available in the Coonamble, Gilgandra and Warrumbungle local government areas until July 16 2013 to those:

- who have been injured as a direct result of the bushfires; or
- whose home has been significantly damaged or destroyed; or
- who were unable to gain access to their home for at least 24 hours; or
- whose home was without electricity, water, gas, sewerage services or another essential service for a continuous period of 48 hours

Claims can be made online at [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au) by phone on 180 22 66, by faxing your completed form to 1300 727 760 or post to:

Emergency Processing Centre

Reply Paid 7815

Canberra BC, ACT 2610

#### **Department of Human Services (Centrelink)**

The Coonabarabran Office agency is located at 27 John Street, Coonabarabran. Open from 9 am to 3.30pm. Access to fax, computers and phones for conducting business with Centrelink. Centrelink Phone numbers:

Employment Related Enquiries - 132 850

Youth and Student Services - 132 490

Family Payments - 136 150

Disabilities, Sickness and Carers - 132 717

Indigenous callers - **1800 136 380**

Retirement / Age Services - 132 300

#### **Health**

Both physical and mental – this is a trying time for many. If you or someone you know is not coping, seek help – contact **Sarah Green** (Rural Adversity Mental Health Program) on **02 6767 8618** or call for a referral to an appropriate professional. Alternatively, for access to local mental health services contact the organisations listed below.

- Access Line – 1800 011 511, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with established rural NSW
- NSW Rural Mental Health Support Line – 1800 201 123 for 24 Hour, 7 Day Support and Information for people in rural communities
- Mensline Australia –1300 789 978 Confidential 24 hour, 7 day telephone counselling for men
- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800 telephone counselling 24 hour, seven days a week
- For general health information contact HealthDirect on 1800 022 222.



## **The Insurance Council**

The Insurance Council can assist communities with any issues related to insurance and the claims process. If necessary they can escalate particular issues to a higher level within your insurance company. The Insurance Council can also explain the dispute process and refer you to the Financial Ombudsman Office if necessary. Call the Insurance Council on its assistance hotline 1800 734 621 (24/7).

## **Insurance Law Service Hotline**

Phone: 1300 663 464

Fact Sheet – Bushfires, Insurance and you – a guide to getting your insurance claim paid can be downloaded from the Legal Aid NSW website

<http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/factsheets-and-resources/bushfires,-insurance-and-you>

Bushfire Insurance Guide is available to download from the Insurance Law Service at [www.insurancelaw.org.au/fact-sheets](http://www.insurancelaw.org.au/fact-sheets)

## **Legal Aid NSW**

Legal Aid provides free advice on a broad range of issues, including:

- insurance claims – before you make a claim and if your claim is rejected; dealing with the insurance company and challenging their decisions
- tenants – where do you stand if you can't live in the home you rent
- mortgages/loans – how do you cope if you can't afford payments because of the floods, illness, loss of your job etc

Our advice is always get advice – never assume there is nothing you can do. Legal Aid's nearest office is Dubbo – 6885 4233; or call LawAccess 1300 888 529

## **Local Charities Supported by the Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Appeal**

Funds from the Appeal have been allocated to the following charities:

- Centacare 6842 3971
- ADRA 0400 324 967
- St Vincent de Paul 6842 2342
- Barnardos 1800 637 210 or 6842 1018

Those impacted by the bushfires can access services provided by these charities directly.

## **Mayor's Bushfire Appeal**

The Council is offering a donation of \$1000 to eligible households from the Warrumbungle Shire's Mayor's Bushfire Appeal fund in recognition of the distress and trauma experienced in losing a home. The home dislocation payment is a one-off payment to all households that lost their principal place of residence or sole asset.

House re-establishment grants for \$5000 per home and shed rebuild grants at \$1000 per shed are also available.

Affected residents can contact the Recovery Centre on 6842 2951 Monday to Friday between 9am and 4:30pm or apply by completing the application form on the link:

[Warrumbungle Shire Mayor's Bushfire Appeal Application Form for \\$1,000 Assistance](#)

### **Motor Vehicle Stamp Duty Relief**

Motorists whose cars have been written off as a result of a natural disaster may be eligible for a stamp duty refund on their replacement vehicle. Refunds are made where the written off vehicle was comprehensively insured and the insurance does not cover duty for a replacement vehicle. Contact Office of State Revenue on 1300 139 814.

### **Personal Hardship and Distress Assistance**

The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services can provide disaster relief grants to eligible individuals and families whose homes and essential household items have been destroyed or damaged by a natural disaster. People with limited financial resources and no insurance may be eligible for assistance for essential household items and structural repairs to the home. Inquiries about the disaster relief grants and the eligibility criteria may be made by calling 1800 018 444.

### **Potable Water**

Potable water is available to bushfire affected residents. Affected residents are entitled to one load of potable water. Contact St Vincent De Paul Coonabarabran on 6842 2342

### **Rural Financial Counsellors**

Rural Financial Counsellors in all areas can help with the completion of forms and information on criteria for this assistance. Contact Liz Tomlinson on 6842 3105 or [liz@rfcsnsw-northernregion.org](mailto:liz@rfcsnsw-northernregion.org) . To contact a counsellor outside Coonabarabran areas visit [http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/352885/RFC-Contact-List-25-Jan-2013.pdf](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0004/352885/RFC-Contact-List-25-Jan-2013.pdf)

### **The Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is available to assist residents impacted by the fires. Contact the Rural Chaplains in **Coonabarabran (Peter and Jean Ridley) on 0423 293 305**. For other areas visit <http://salvos.org.au/need-help/rural-isolation/>

### **Support from the Tax Office**

The Australian Tax Office wants to support people who are going through tough times. They will work with you to help you sort out your **tax affairs**. See "Dealing with disasters - home" ([www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)).

### **Warrumbungle Shire Recovery Centre**

Is based at Warrumbungle Shire Council office, Coonabarabran, to help residents in the Warrumbungle Local Government Area who have been affected by the fire. The centre is currently open 9am to 4:30pm. The phone number for the Centre is **6842 2951**.

## **RURAL ASSISTANCE**

### **Additional Assistance (RAA)**

Consideration for deferral of payments on NSW Rural Assistance Authority loans is available, where temporary repayment difficulties as a result of natural disaster can be demonstrated. Contact the Authority on 1800 678 593.

### **Assistance Guide**

Information about more general support for the farming community is available in the Rural Support Workers' assistance guide on the web – <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/services/community/support-workers/guide>

### **Backtrack (Rotary Club of Dubbo South)**

The Backtrack team are available for general clean-up and rubble removal, emergency fencing, emergency stockyard repairs, moving stock, carting hay, feeding stock, relocating equipment and clearing fence lines.

Contact: Dusty Fenn 0427 044 907 or Lauren Zell 0422 893 296.

### **BlazeAid (Fencing)**

BlazeAid is a volunteer organisation that works with farmers and families in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. Working alongside farmers volunteers help to rebuild fences that have been burnt or damaged. BlazeAid has a camp at the Coonabarabran Showground. Fencing materials need to be supplied to BlazeAid so they can build fences. Contact Laurie Dawson on 0418 349 317 or the BlazeAid office on 6842 1844.

### **Clean up Grants**

Clean up and recovery grants of up to \$15,000 are available to primary producers in the Warrumbungle area. The assistance is designed to help with the economic impacts the fires have had on local farms and the wider community. Contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority for assessment of eligible on 1800 678 593.

### **Disaster Relief Loans – Primary Producers**

Loans of up to \$130 000 are available, subject to certain availability criteria, at a concessional interest rate of 2.67% for those in urgent need. These loans may be used to meet carry on requirements and the replacement of livestock and infrastructure. The repayment term is preceded by a two year interest and repayment free period. Claims must be lodged within six months of the declared date of the disaster. For more information contact the NSW Rural Assistance Authority on 1800 678 593 – <http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/natural-disaster-relief/loans>

### **Emergency Fodder**

Emergency fodder is available through Coonabarabran Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) .To register for this assistance call Coonabarabran LHPA on 6842 1300 or to donate fodder contact NSW DPI hotline on 1800 814 647.

## **Primefacts**

Fire recovery information is available in the various Primefacts fact sheets on the DPI website:

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au /agriculture](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture)

## **Livestock**

- Fire emergencies: helping your animals
- Advice for pet owners during emergencies
- Assessing bushfire burns in livestock
- Humane destruction of stock
- Caring for native animals after bushfires
- Agistment guidelines
- Horses and bushfires ([new.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://new.dpi.vic.gov.au))

## **Crops & pastures**

- Weed strategies following drought, fire and flood
- Pasture recovery after bushfires

DPI Extension Officers are available in district offices to assist with specific inquiries

## **Rural Support Workers**

Rural Support Workers provide support as required to farming families and rural communities needing any form of assistance and are currently helping with fire recovery.

Contact Cheryl Pope on 0428 435 593 or [cheryl.pope@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cheryl.pope@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

Other areas are serviced by other Rural Support Workers – see

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/services/community/support-workers>

## **Stock and Pastures**

For assistance with stock or pastures related issues contact Janelle at the LHPA on 68421300 or Bob Freebairn on 0428 752 149.

## **Transport Subsidies**

Industry and Investment NSW will rebate 50% of the transport costs for movement of:

stock from burnt areas to agistment

fodder to burnt areas

stock returning from agistment to burnt areas

These rebates apply to primary producers in areas affected by fire in NSW, subject to eligibility criteria.

Maximum subsidy available is \$15000 per annum.

Claims must be submitted not more than six months after first movement. Submit all

claim forms to your Livestock Health and Pest Authority with invoices, receipts and other documentation.

Forms are available from your local LHPA office, Rural Support Worker or download from

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/flood](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/flood)

## **WIRES**

If you have found an injured native animal please phone WIRES on 1300 094 737.

## **COUNSELLING SERVICES**

Distress is an understandable and normal response to trauma. As the impact of a major incident, such as a flood or other severe weather, continues to become evident, so may the persistent feelings of isolation, distress, anxiety and, in some cases, depression. The following services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Beyondblue** - 1200 22 4636, information and referral line

**Kids Helpline** - 1800 551 800, telephone counselling

**Lifeline** - 13 11 14, confidential telephone counselling

**MensLine Australia** - 1300 789 978, confidential telephone counselling for men

**NSW Rural Mental Health Support Line** - 1800 201 123, support and referral

**State Mental Health Telephone Access Line**- 1800 011 511, press "Option 1" to be transferred to your nearest Community Mental Health Drug & Alcohol Service

## **Bushfire Support Coordination Service Steering Committee**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Purpose of the Bushfire Support Coordination Service (BSCS)**

The Bushfire Support Coordination Service (BSCS) is a temporary service funded by government to help affected individuals, families and communities recover from the recent Warrumbungle bushfires. The BSCS supplements the existing local human services system to meet additional demand, provide flexible service and ensure that individuals, households and primary producers who have experienced significant loss can access trained support workers. BSCS workers will connect users with relevant support services and assist recovery.

#### **Purpose of the BSCS Steering Committee**

The BSCS Steering Committee is the local expert panel established to drive development and implementation of the service. The Steering Committee is responsible for guiding the BSCS and associated service delivery, policies, programs and tools.

#### **Responsibilities**

1. Provide strategic direction for the development of BSCS policy and work programs.
2. Serve as the local point of consultation on BSCS matters, provide advice and input and formally report to the Human Services Sub Committee, the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (MPES) and other stakeholders as required.
3. Ensure the BSCS operates within scope as outlined in the BSCS Service Manual.
4. Facilitate and coordinate the specialist support required for service delivery.
5. Provide practice support in the implementation and delivery of the service, with identified members provide support and guidance to the Bushfire Support Coordinator as required.
6. Inform and guide the development of key messages and public information communicated in regards to the BSCS.
7. Provide advice to MPES on the service levels required to meet demand and resource requirements (any changes in scope and service levels must be endorsed by MPES). Monitor progress and facilitate decision making on the applicability of and need for the BSCS over time.
8. Ensure the BSCS supports broader recovery, promotes disaster resilience and adopts a strengths-based approach.
9. At the conclusion of the service, participate in review and evaluation processes designed to assess overall service delivery. Report accordingly.

#### **Membership**

**Facilitator:** Mike Myers

**Members:** Senior representatives, with roles relevant to the terms of reference, from the following agencies:

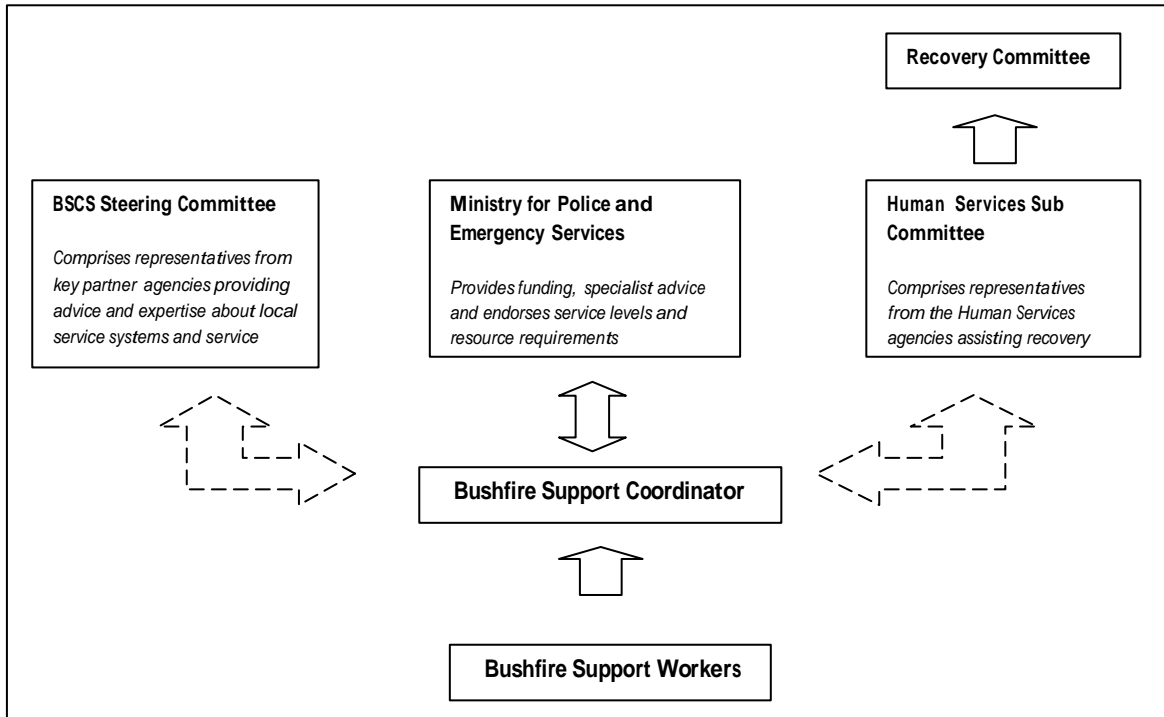
- Warrumbungle Shire Council
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services NSW, Community Services – Dubbo Network Office
- Greater Western Area Health Service
- Greater Western Area Health Service – Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Service
- Barnardos Australia – Western
- NSW Centacare Bathurst NSW
- NSW Department of Primary Industries – Rural Support Network
- Bushfire Support Coordination Service

Teleconferences called with MPES as required.

Observers and presenters are invited as required.

### Governance

The BSCS Steering Committee is accountable and provides oversight of service delivery by the following mechanisms.



### Meetings

The BSCS Steering Committee will meet fortnightly or as required.

### Reporting

Minutes will be produced for each meeting and distributed to stakeholders including the Human Services Sub Committee and MPES within 5 days of each meeting.

### Secretariat

Secretariat support will be shared amongst members of the committee as agreed.

### Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed as determined by the Chair and endorsed by MPES.

### Duration

The BSCS has been funded for an initial period of six months and will be extended as required. Continued service provision is dependent on needs assessment and review.

### Venue

The meeting venue will be advised prior to each meeting.

# Appendix 2 Bushfire Support Coordination Service -Brochure

## Bushfire Recovery Assistance

### Bushfire Support Coordination Service;

A personalised support workers service assisting with information, decision-making and recovery resource needs.

Call: 68492000

### Recovery Centre:

Based in the Council Offices to assist residents in the Warrumbungle Shire who have been affected by the fire. Open between 9am and 4:30pm.

Call: 6842 2951.



If you, your family or friends need support, please call

6849 2000 or  
0459 819 508

Warrumbungle Shire Council Offices  
John St Coonabarabran E-mail: john.lyons@warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au



NSW and Commonwealth Governments fund the service under the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangement

## Bushfire Support Coordination Service

Phone: 6849 2000 or  
0459 819 508



Opening hours: 9am to 4:30pm

Coordinator: John Lyons  
Warrumbungle Shire Council Office,  
20-22 John St, Coonabarabran

## Bushfire Support Coordinators

Bushfire Support Workers are available to help households directly affected by the bushfire.



A Bushfire Support Worker can:

- => Provide information about the range of assistance available
- => Help users work out what needs to be done and develop an action plan
- => Connect users with services and assist in coordinating these
- => Undertake referral and application processes
- => Facilitate meetings between users and relevant agencies
- => Assist with practicalities such as dealing with insurance companies or replacing key documents.

They can meet you anywhere you choose - your home, work place or somewhere you feel comfortable.

They can connect you to services that provide (but are not limited to):

- => Accommodation assistance
- => Rents assistance or information
- => Insurance help
- => School/childcare support
- => Health services
- Counselling support and social services



This support is based on your individual circumstances.

### Need help with finances?

There is a range of government grants and loans and material assistance from non-government agencies available.



To find out more, request a bushfire support worker.

This service is free and confidential.

After hours appointments can be arranged if needed:  
6849 2000 or 0459 819 508

Warrumbungle Shire Council Offices  
John St Coonabarabran E-mail: john.lyons@warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au