



Hawkesbury City Council

disaster and
emergency
committee
business
paper

date of meeting: 7 September 2021

location: by audio-visual link

time: 5:30 p.m.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

AGENDA

- **WELCOME**
- **APOLOGIES**
- **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**
- **SECTION 1 - Confirmation of Minutes**
- **SECTION 2 - Reports for Determination**

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ITEM	SUBJECT	PAGE
SECTION 1 - Confirmation of Minutes		7
	ROC - Disaster and Emergency Committee Minutes - 14 April 2021 - (79351, 151940)	7
SECTION 1 - Reports for Determination		15
Item: 001	DE - Emergency Management - (151940, 95495)	15

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

disaster and
emergency
committee

section 1

confirmation of
minutes

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

SECTION 1 - Confirmation of Minutes

ROC - Disaster and Emergency Committee Minutes - 14 April 2021 - (79351, 151939)

Minutes of the Meeting of the Disaster and Emergency Committee held in the Council Chambers and by Audio-Visual link, on 14 April 2021, commencing at 5:30pm.

Present: Councillor Barry Calvert, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Patrick Conolly, Mayor, Hawkesbury City Council - Chairperson
Councillor Emma-Jane Garrow, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Amanda Kotlash, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Mary Lyons-Buckett, Deputy Mayor, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Sarah Richards, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor John Ross, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Danielle Wheeler, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Nathan Zamprogno, Hawkesbury City Council

Apologies: Councillor Paul Rasmussen, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Peter Reynolds, Hawkesbury City Council
Councillor Tiffany Tree, Hawkesbury City Council

In Attendance: Mr Phil Bow, New South Wales Police Force
Mr Jim Stewart, New South Wales Police Force
Mr Kevin Jones, NSW State Emergency Service
Ms Alison Morgan, Resilience NSW
Mr Laurie Mifsud, Hawkesbury City Council
Mr Jeff Organ, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Linda Perrine, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Emma Galea, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Suzanne Stuart, Hawkesbury City Council
Mr Andrew Kearns, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Meagan Ang, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Jackie Carr, Hawkesbury City Council
Mr Charles McElroy, Hawkesbury City Council
Ms Tracey Easterbrook, Hawkesbury City Council

APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Sarah Richards and seconded by Councillor Nathan Zamprogno that the apologies be accepted.

Councillor Garrow arrived at the meeting at 5:56pm.
Mr Phil Bow arrived at the meeting at 5:58pm.

Councillor Garrow left the meeting at 7pm.
Mr Jim Stewart left the meeting at 7:45pm.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Attendance Register of Disaster and Emergency Committee

Member	14/04/2021
Councillor Barry Calvert	✓
Councillor Patrick Conolly	✓
Councillor Emma-Jane Garrow	✓
Councillor Amanda Kotlash	✓
Councillor Mary Lyons-Buckett	✓
Councillor Paul Rasmussen	A
Councillor Peter Reynolds	A
Councillor Sarah Richards	✓
Councillor John Ross	✓
Councillor Tiffany Tree	A
Councillor Danielle Wheeler	✓
Councillor Nathan Zamprogno	✓

Key: A = Formal Apology ✓ = Present X = Absent - no apology

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no Declaration of Interests made.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

SECTION 1 - Reports for Determination

Item: 001 **DE - Emergency Planning and Response - (151940, 95495)**

Division: Infrastructure

Ms Alison Morgan from Resilience NSW addressed the Committee Meeting.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. The Committee consider the information in the report relating to Emergency Planning and Response
2. Receive the presentations from relevant agencies; and
3. Identify matters for further action or resolution by Council.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Wheeler, seconded by Councillor Lyons-Buckett.

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. The Committee note the information in the report relating to Emergency Planning and Response.
2. The Committee receive the presentations from relevant agencies.
3. The Committee identify matters for further action or resolution by Council.
4. Council write to residents and businesses in flood-affected areas to provide written information about recovery services, Services NSW registration, clean-up and any other relevant information.
5. Council seek to facilitate the production of an overall review of the 2021 Flood to provide operational information to a future Council and the community.

For the Motion: Councillors Conolly, Calvert, Kotlash, Lyons-Buckett, Ross, Richards, Wheeler and Zamprogno.

Against the Motion: Nil.

Absent: Councillors Garrow, Rasmussen, Reynolds and Tree.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Item: 002 **DE - Floodplain Management Matters - (151940, 95498)**

Division: City Planning

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. Consider the Richmond Bridge Duplication Project further following the release of the Preferred Option Report by Transport for NSW.
2. Recommend that Council advocate with all relevant agencies and organisations for resilience planning of infrastructure networks during flood events.
3. Consider the matter of closure of bridges when further amendments are proposed to the Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Emergency Sub Plan.
4. Recommend the formation of a working group to the Committee to act as an advisory group for Council's grant funded floodplain management projects in accordance with the NSW Floodplain Development Manual.
5. Consider the Warragamba Dam Wall matter further following the release of the Environmental Impact Statement by Water NSW.

A MOTION was moved by Councillor Kotlash, seconded by Councillor Calvert.

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. Advise Council that it should urgently advocate for the Richmond Bridge Duplication Project to include a bridge and approach roads that provide better access during a major flood event.
2. Recommend that Council advocate with all relevant agencies and organisations for resilience planning for infrastructure, in particular electricity, during flood events.
3. Recommend that the Committee continue to provide advice for Council's grant funded floodplain management projects.

An AMENDMENT was moved by Councillor Wheeler, seconded by Councillor Lyons-Buckett.

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. Advise Council that it should urgently advocate for the Richmond Bridge Duplication Project to include a bridge and approach roads that provide better access during a major flood event.
2. Recommend that Council advocate with all relevant agencies and organisations for resilience planning for infrastructure, in particular electricity, during flood events.
3. Recommend the formation of a working group to the Committee to act as an advisory group for Council's grant funded floodplain management projects in accordance with the NSW Floodplain Development Manual.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

For the Amendment: Councillors Lyons-Buckett and Wheeler.

Against the Amendment: Councillors Conolly, Calvert, Kotlash, Ross, Richards and Zamprogno.

Absent: Councillors Garrow, Rasmussen, Reynolds and Tree.

The amendment was lost.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Kotlash, seconded by Councillor Calvert.

That the Disaster and Emergency Committee:

1. Advise Council that it should urgently advocate for the Richmond Bridge Duplication Project to include a bridge and approach roads that provide better access during a major flood event.
2. Recommend that Council advocate with all relevant agencies and organisations for resilience planning for infrastructure, in particular electricity, during flood events.
3. Recommend that the Committee continue to provide advice for Council's grant funded floodplain management projects.

For the Motion: Councillors Conolly, Calvert, Kotlash, Ross, Richards and Zamprogno.

Against the Motion: Councillors Lyons-Buckett, and Wheeler.

Absent: Councillors Garrow, Rasmussen, Reynolds and Tree.

The meeting terminated at 8:05pm.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

disaster and
emergency
committee

section 2

reports
for determination

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Item: DE - Emergency Management - (151940, 95495)

Previous Item: 162, Ordinary (24 August 2021)

Directorate: Infrastructure Services

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Disaster and Emergency Committee as directed by Council at its meeting held on 24 August 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council, at its meeting held on 24 August 2021, considered a Notice of Motion regarding emergency management and resolved:

“That Council:

1. *Directs the Disaster and Emergency Committee to meet no later than 16 September 2021 to consider:*
 - a) *Whether Council requires any supporting emergency plans, in addition to the statutory plans.*
 - b) *The learnings of the Wingecarribee Shire Council Bushfire Response and Recovery Review 2021.*
 - c) *The bushfire review completed by Anne Leadbeater, if it is available at the time of the meeting.*
2. *Refers the development of the MacDonald Valley Flood Study to the Disaster and Emergency Committee for advice as and when required.*
3. *Adapt its extreme heat plan to provide COVID safe cool locations for community members.*
4. *Receive a briefing on Council’s Resilience Plan and support plans, including content and costings of distribution of the Emergency Management Guide.*
5. *Receive an updated timeline for the progress of the EMPLAN.*
6. *Ensure that our plans include provision for and guidance on evacuation of domestic animals and livestock and care for the same and rehearsals.*
7. *Continue to maintain a list of shovel-ready projects for grant funding.*
8. *Append the MacDonald Valley Association submission to the Public Hearing Program for the 2019/2020 Bushfires*
9. *Follow-up inclusion of additional information relating to the MacDonald Valley on its Emergency Dashboard”*

RECOMMENDATION:

That:

1. The Committee consider the information in the report addressing each part of the Resolution
2. Identify matters for further action or resolution by Council.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

BACKGROUND

Council at its meeting of 24 August 2021 resolved that the Disaster and Emergency Committee meet no later than 16 September 2021 to consider various items raised as part of the Emergency Management Notice of Motion. As such, the Disaster and Emergency Committee meeting was arranged for 7 September 2021.

An update on each of the items is below for the consideration of the Committee.

1. Directs the Disaster and Emergency Committee to meet no later than 16 September 2021 to consider:

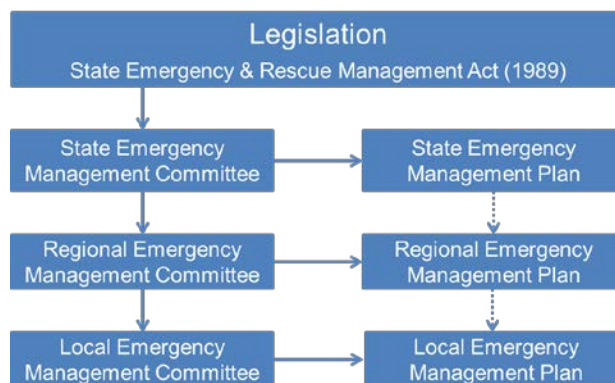
a) Whether Council requires any supporting emergency plans, in addition to the statutory plans

Local Council has two legislated responsibilities under the State Emergency Rescue Management (SERM) Act:

- Chair the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)
- Provide executive support facilities for the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON).

Council contributes to the legislative Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) through its membership of the LEMC.

The diagram below summarises the emergency plans and the corresponding responsibilities under the SERM Act.



Other plans currently that support the emergency management, planning and response functions of Council or which are in development include the following:

Local Recovery Plan

In January 2019 Council took the opportunity to be part of a pilot project to develop a Local Recovery Plan lead by Office of Emergency Management (now Resilience NSW).

Hawkesbury LGA was selected to be part of the pilot due to its risk of fire and significant flood, however in September due to fire activity in Northern NSW this work was placed on hold indefinitely as OEM resources were required to assist.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

The Local Recovery Plan is being developed by Council's Community Recovery Officer, guided by the pilot Local Recovery Plan template, incorporating the learnings from 19/20 bushfires and the March 2021 flood event. A copy of this Plan is provided as **Attachment 1** to this report.

Recovery Action Plan - Greater Sydney Region

NSW Bushfires – 2019/2020

A copy of this Plan is attached as **Attachment 2** to this report.

Business Recovery Plan – Hawkesbury City Council

A copy of this Plan is attached as **Attachment 3** to this report.

Recovery Action Plan - Hawkesbury Nepean Region

NSW Severe Weather & Flood Event – March-April 2021.

A copy of this Plan is provided as **Attachment 4** to this report.

Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Emergency Plan (2020)

This plan describes the state-level emergency management arrangements for floods affecting the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley.

A copy of this Plan is provided as attached as **Attachment 5** to this report.

Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plan - Traffic & Transport Plan

A copy of this Plan is provided as **Attachment 6** to this report.

Hawkesbury Nepean Valley: NSW SES – Managing Transport Impacts

A copy of this Plan is attached as **Attachment 7** to this report.

Hawkesbury City Local Flood Plan

Sub plan to Hawkesbury Local EMPLAN.

A copy of this Plan is attached as **Attachment 8** to this report.

Other emergency planning activities Council is actively involved in include:

- Infrastructure NSW lead Flood Preparedness Project – 'Communities of Concern'
- <https://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/expert-advice/hawkesbury-nepean-flood-risk-management-strategy/>
- Projects include social housing resilience networks (refer **Attachment 9** *Get Prepared for Flood* flyer developed in consultation with housing tenants), emergency transport planning, preparedness work with NGOs to engage communities of concern (includes rough sleepers)
- Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District lead Climate Resilience Healthcare Working Group
- WSROC climate workshops and initiatives (Heatwave Emergency Management)
- Person Centred Emergency Preparedness Project – Sydney University and Peppercorn Services Inc.
- Community Recovery activities including support of grass-roots recovery initiatives in outlying communities through outreach hubs, administering Resilience NSW grant funding and consulting with communities to develop community recovery action plans
- Sydney University lead Person Centred Emergency Preparedness project, focused on people with disabilities. Training residents in outlying areas to develop and lead person centred emergency preparedness planning within their community networks. Develops relationships between emergency service agencies and residents to increase awareness of and preparedness for natural disaster

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

b) The learnings of the Wingecarribee Shire Council Bushfire Response and Recovery Review 2021

The recently released Wingecarribee Shire Council review has been reviewed and considered by Council staff. A copy of this review document is attached as **Attachment 10** to this report.

Many of the recommendations in the review are standard practice or already in progress in Hawkesbury City Council's emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities. It should be noted that the recommendations in many cases are specific to the circumstances of the Wingecarribee area, however provide a useful measure for other councils and potential improvements to manage future events.

Of the 44 recommendations the following provides a breakdown of potential learning areas for Hawkesbury City Council:

Hawkesbury Status	No.
Recommendations - Completed	20
Recommendations – For Consideration	12
Recommendations – In Progress	8
Recommendations – To be Confirmed	1
Recommendations – Not Applicable	3
Total	44

The recommendations for consideration include activities such as:

- Provision of a catering trailer
- Consideration establishment of a Mayoral Relief Fund
- Management of parks and reserves during catastrophic weather conditions
- Availability of electronic folder for LEMC
- Additional training requirements e.g. Emergency Management Operating System, Accidental Counsellor training and Bushfires, Burns and their Management
- Emergency management information provided to residents
- Consolidated recovery action reporting
- Appointment of a Grants Officer
- Widening of debrief process to include all frontline customer facing staff.

A detailed response is being prepared for each of the recommendations for consideration by LEMC and Council to ensure continuous improvement in Hawkesbury's emergency management practices. Preliminary responses of the 44 recommendations are attached as **Attachment 11**.

c) The bushfire review completed by Anne Leadbeater, if it is available at the time of the meeting

Anne Leadbeater's report *Reflecting on Councils Role in Emergency Management* and associated recommendations will be presented to this Disaster and Emergency Committee Meeting. Anne will also be present to facilitate a discussion of the report.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

2. Refers the development of the MacDonald Valley Flood Study to the Disaster and Emergency Committee for advice as and when required

The development of the MacDonald Valley Flood Study will be referred to the Disaster and Emergency Committee as work progresses.

3. Adapt its extreme heat plan to provide COVID safe cool locations for community members

Hawkesbury City Council has an existing procedure for *Working in Hot, Cold or Contaminated Environments*. A copy of this procedure is attached as **Attachment 12** to this report.

Section 3.2.4 of this procedure refers to extending operating times during periods of extreme heat to support the Hawkesbury community in dealing with these weather events. Council facilities (Oasis Leisure Centre, Richmond Pool and Windsor Library) extend opening hours to provide respite for Hawkesbury residents through the provision of cool refuge spaces.

Whilst these facilities are currently closed due to COVID restrictions; a COVID safe plan will be developed to ensure safe access to the community during the summer period. This plan will consider the current conditions, including a risk assessment, prior to activation of a cool refuge to ensure the safety of the community is maintained.

In the event of prolonged heat wave Council will liaise with local NGO's to assess suitable locations to increase capacity to ensure COVID compliance and community safety is maintained.

4. Receive a briefing on Council's Resilience Plan and support plans, including content and costings of distribution of the Emergency Management Guide

Council utilised the Commonwealth bushfire grant to engage a temporary resource in the role of Resilience Planning Coordinator. The primary purpose of this role is to develop the Hawkesbury Resilience Plan; anticipated completion June 2022.

To date, a high-level review of the requirements for a resilience plan has been undertaken and a proposed structure for a local Hawkesbury resilience plan has been developed and work will commence on further development of the plan.

A copy of the draft framework for the Plan is provided as **Attachment 13** to this report.

With regards to a proposed Emergency Management Guide, a draft document with content has been prepared in house, without graphic design or marketing review. The design of such a document would ideally align with contemporary messaging and other materials and campaigns undertaken by RFS, SES, Resilience NSW and Local Land Services to ensure maximum utility and effect. An indicative cost of \$12,000 for the printing of the guide is estimated based on the example Emergency Management Guides previously developed by Wollondilly Council and Goulburn Mulwaree Council.

It is envisaged that this guide could be distributed with the rates notice and there would be no additional cost for postage in this circumstance. However, if the guide cannot be distributed with the rates notice (as the size of the document may not be able to be accommodated in the envelope) there would be a significant additional cost of up to \$30,000 for postage. This would also be required if the distribution of the guide were to all households/residents rather than the rates mailout which would only reach owners of properties.

5. Receive an updated timeline for the progress of the EMPLAN

The Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) has been reviewed and updated by the LEMC members. The plan was sent to the Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) on 30 August 2021 for review.

Endorsement of the plan by the Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON) occurs at the conclusion of the review period, incorporating any feedback from members. This process is anticipated to take approximately six weeks.

The existing plan remains operational until the updated plan is endorsed and approved.

6. Ensure that our plans include provision for and guidance on evacuation of domestic animals and livestock and care for the same and rehearsals

It is accepted by emergency management practitioners and reflected in emergency management planning that animals will accompany many evacuees. For this reason, animal holding facilities are a consideration for all evacuation centres across the Hawkesbury LGA; suitable areas for small and large animal holding facilities are considered in assessing any facilities suitability as an evacuation centre.

All evacuation centres identified in the Hawkesbury EMPLAN are able to accommodate domestic animals with the exception of the University of Western Sydney (Richmond Campus) due to biosecurity conflicts.

A copy of this template is attached as **Attachment 14** to this report.

Animal Ready Community Working Group

In recent years there has been considerable work in engaging with the Hawkesbury community to plan for their animals during an emergency.

The Hawkesbury Nepean Animal Ready Community Working Group was established in 2018 and consists of representatives from NSW State Emergency Services, Infrastructure NSW, Hawkesbury City Council, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services, Agnes Banks Equine Vet Clinic and Macquarie University. The working group is focused on engaging with animal owners across the Hawkesbury to develop a plan for their animals in the event of an emergency.

It should be noted that an animal emergency plan, particularly where livestock is involved, may not always involve evacuation. It may not be logistically viable to evacuate large animals or livestock and other emergency response actions may be more appropriate e.g. open all internal gates, leaving external gates closed allowing animals to move freely within the property or moving animals to higher ground in the event of flooding. This group is focussed on educating the community on the variety of options available for consideration in planning for their animals during an emergency.

Numerous community engagement activities and tools have been developed to support and educate the community when planning for their animals; including:

- Open Day: Horse Safety and Care
- Direct engagement at community events; including Hawkesbury Show
- The development of the [Keeping Your Animals Safe in an Emergency](#) booklet
- A suite of short videos as part of an education project aimed to encourage, inspire and motivate the general community to prepare for themselves and their animals before an emergency occurs.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Large Animal Holding Facilities

Whilst the Animal Ready Community Working Group is designed to engage with animal owners to be resilient and consider animal management and options suitable for their circumstances, Council recognises that this is not always possible and continues to advocate for a suitable facility to support large animal evacuations.

State emergency plans have identified facilities at Homebush for large animal evacuations in the event of large scale disasters, however Council recognises that this option is not always practical, particularly where multiple trips are required to evacuate. It is for this reason that Council continues to advocate to consider a suitable location to meet the needs of peri-urban communities like the Hawkesbury.

A copy of the Royal Commission Submission is attached as **Attachment 15** and the NSW Bushfire Inquiry submission is attached as **Attachment 16** to this report.

In the interim, Council has had an initial meeting with Hawkesbury Showground during the evacuation centre audits and intend to meet again with Showground management when COVID restrictions permit to document guidelines for the operation of an animal holding facility in the event of an emergency.

Consideration will also be given to establishing a formal arrangement with The Hills Shire Council to utilise their facilities in the event of flood, or other circumstances where Hawkesbury Showground is unsuitable or unavailable.

7. Continue to maintain a list of shovel-ready projects for grant funding

Councils Manager Community Planning and Partnerships leads the Community Recovery grants administration (application for and management of all grant funded projects related to community recovery).

This includes the promotion of available grants, facilitation of education sessions and provides support to community groups and NGOs in submitting applications for a range of disaster recovery funding available. Staff also administer small grants program on behalf of Resilience NSW.

A list of "shovel ready" projects will continue to be maintained and supplemented as new projects are identified.

To date Council has applied or received numerous grants, identified below:

Grant Application	\$	Purpose
Bushfire Recovery Exceptional Assistance Immediate Support Package (Bushfire Recovery Funding)	\$1,300,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recovery case management• Recovery support, advice and community activities• Business recovery• Removal of dangerous trees• Planning advice and support• Resilience planning• Recovery coordination• Telecommunications report.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE**Meeting Date: 7 September 2021**

Grant Application	\$	Purpose
Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) – Stream 1	\$250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a Resilient Hawkesbury Strategy.• Deliver a community education project that will develop the resilience of individuals, community services systems and communities as a whole within the LGA.• Administer a grants program that will provide small grants to community organisations and groups who can deliver projects in the Hawkesbury that will develop community resilience and promote recovery.
Building Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Bilpin Community Project	\$560,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Space Aspects including multi age playground and recreation facilities, outdoor space for communal gatherings, community generated public art feature/s, oval improvements.• Bushfire Aspects, including water storage, hall fire resistance upgrade, renewable energy and storage, bushfire damaged signage replacement.
Building Local Economic Recovery (BLER) St Albans Community Project	\$560,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Space Aspects, including upgrade of community space/village marketplace for communal gatherings, community generated public art feature/s, improvements to St Albans School of Arts including access and removal of redundant structure.• Bushfire Aspects, including improvements to supply and reliability of water supply during bushfires, bushfire damaged signage replacement.
Building Local Economic Recovery (BLER) Colo Heights Community Projects	\$560,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Space Aspects, including multi age playground and recreation facilities, upgrade of community space for communal gatherings, community generated public art feature/s, oval improvements.• Bushfire Aspects, including water storage, Improvements to supply and reliability of water supply during bushfires, fire resistance upgrade, renewable energy and storage, bushfire damaged signage replacement.
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund – Stage 1	\$200,000	Economic Development - Industry and business development
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund – Stage 2	\$200,000	Economic Development - Industry and business development
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	\$498,240	Community Advice and Support Service Hubs

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Grant Application	\$	Purpose
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	\$455,700	Construction of a footpath between Bilpin Hall and the town centre

8. **Append the MacDonald Valley Association submission to the Public Hearing Program for the 2019/2020 Bushfires**

The MacDonald Valley submission is attached as **Attachment 17** to this report.

9. **Follow-up inclusion of additional information relating to the MacDonald Valley on its Emergency Dashboard**

Additional information relating to the MacDonald Valley on Council's Disaster and Emergency Dashboard is largely dependent upon the support of other agencies.

Real time river height data is one of the most effective tools available to emergency service organisations, Council and residents in ensuring sufficient time for flood preparation and to monitor potential impacts; data which is not presently available to the MacDonald Valley.

Council continues to advocate on behalf of the residents of the MacDonald Valley to have river height gauges installed across the valley to provide time crucial information to the community to support their emergency preparation and response activities.

Council will also review its processes with regards to road closures across the valley and the timely update of information provided on the dashboard; including utilisation of locally based staff and where appropriate local resident provided information.

DISCUSSION

Emergency Management Resourcing

In addition to the foregoing discussion it is becoming clear that the issue of coordinating the elements of Emergency Management across the continuum of Resilience, Planning, Response and Recovery is becoming an imperative in all areas of Australia. The growth and spread of populations into areas of heightened risk along with an awareness of the levels of risk and the need to plan for more extreme events, requires consideration of additional resourcing to manage each of these elements.

Council has a significant role in each of these aspects. Whilst traditionally the focus has been on the response phase and the agencies and functional areas response to the incident or emergency, the role of local government in mitigating loss, damage and other human and social impacts, in conjunction with other levels of government, is a critical aspect.

Throughout the most recent situations of bushfire, flooding and pandemic significant management and coordination of not only internal work, but also management and response to external agency and other organisations has been required. This includes grant management, project coordination and delivery and community engagement. Whilst a large range of grants have become available, generally for specific projects or programs and additional resources have been employed where eligible, there has been a significant extra workload for Council in coordinating many of the aspects of those projects, noting that internal costs are generally not considered eligible expenditures.

In order to fulfil the future demands of emergency management, dedicated resourcing needs to be considered. Advocacy has taken place in numerous forums and meetings with both State and Commonwealth agencies in regard to the desirability of having a permanent program to enable

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

councils in general, and Hawkesbury specifically, to not only have dedicated staff but also resourcing to undertake ongoing planning and response works.

Whilst this advocacy for grant funding can continue, there is an immediate need to have suitably experienced staff engaged to maximise and optimise our emergency management activities, and minimise impacts on the other normal or routine business of Council. Ideally this would involve the employment on a permanent basis of an Emergency Management Coordinator, who would have oversight of all aspects of Councils Emergency Management responsibilities and act as either the LEMO or Deputy LEMO.

Whilst no funding is included in Council's current Operational Plan for this role there are a number of options for Council to consider in the interim or on an ongoing basis. These include:

- Engagement on a temporary basis of a coordinator to supplement existing staff and link together the various recovery and planning aspects. Funding remains available within the bushfire grant funding for that role on a temporary basis, noting the original engagement of a temporary employee in that role, which duties were subsequently assigned to an existing employee when that employee left. Sufficient funding remains to engage a person for approximately 6 months. It would however prove difficult to recruit a suitably qualified and experienced person to a short-term role.
- Utilise the available funding as per the first option and fill the role on a permanent or longer-term contract basis. This would require council to create this as a new position and this would then be committed and reflected in future Operational Plans and budgets.
- Seek to include a charge for emergency service management, similar to the charge made by Blue Mountains Council. Whilst the BMCC charge also covers the statutory Council contributions made to the NSW government for RFS and SES in addition to emergency management programs, it is envisaged that any charge made by HCC would only cover the cost of an employee as well as funding of programs related to Emergency Management, training and readiness exercises. Indicatively a flat rate charge in the order of \$15 per property is considered adequate (BMCC charge is \$57 per property) and would not supplant councils existing financial commitments. This would however require a regulatory approval by the Minister.
- Hybrid options of any of the above.

ATTACHMENTS:

- AT - 1 Hawkesbury Local Recovery Plan - Pilot - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 2 Recovery Action Plan Greater Sydney Region – NSW Bushfires 2019/2020 - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 3 Hawkesbury City Council Business Recovery Plan - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 4 Recovery Action Plan - Hawkesbury Nepean Region - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 5 Hawkesbury-Nepean Flood Emergency Plan (2020) - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 6 Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plan - Traffic & Transport Plan - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 7 Hawkesbury Nepean Valley: NSW SES – Managing Transport Impacts - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 8 Hawkesbury City Local Flood Plan - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

- AT - 9** Social Housing Floor Flyer.
- AT - 10** Wingecarribee Shire Council Bushfire Response and Recovery Review 2021 - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 11** Wingecarribee Shire Council Bushfire Review Recommendations - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 12** Working in Hot, Cold or Contaminated Environments Procedure - *(Distributed under separate cover)*.
- AT - 13** Resilience Plan – High Level Review and Proposed Structure – August 2021.
- AT - 14** Evacuation Centre Audit & Summary Template.
- AT - 15** Royal Commission Submission.
- AT - 16** NSW Bushfire Inquiry Submission.
- AT - 17** MacDonald Valley Submission.

AT - 9 Social Housing Floor Flyer

GET PREPARED FOR FLOOD

Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley

**Your local flood risk**

You live in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley – a region with a long history of flooding.

The floodplain is fed by five rivers. When there is heavy rainfall, water from the rivers flows into the floodplain, but is held back on its way to the ocean by more than 100 kilometres of narrow gorges. This 'bathtub' effect means that floodwaters can back up and rise quickly, causing wide, deep and dangerous floods.

Floodwater can contain hidden dangers like debris, electrical wires, pollutants and sewerage. In a flood, bridges can be cut, roads closed, public transport routes interrupted, and a loss of power can disrupt mobile phone and internet usage.

It's important for everyone who lives in the floodplain to be prepared. For more information you can visit www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au

How to prepare for flood

✓ **Know where to get updates and warnings**

- Bureau of Meteorology: local weather updates
- NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES): information on floods and storms
- ABC Radio: the official emergency broadcaster

✓ **Prepare an emergency bag**

What to pack:

1. Health care items like medications and prescriptions
2. Copies of your important documents (hard copies or stored on a USB)
3. Important valuables and mementos
4. Important phone numbers
5. Radio, torch and batteries
6. Clothing and personal items

✓ **Make a plan for if you need to evacuate**

Know where you will go, how you will get there, what evacuation routes you can use, what you will do with your animals, and how you will manage your health

✓ **Share your plan**

Talk with your relatives, friends, and neighbours about what you will do if you need to evacuate

What to do during a flood**Follow NSW SES Flood Advice and Emergency Warnings**

- Listen to your local ABC radio station for up to date flood information and advice
- Follow advice from NSW SES if you are asked to evacuate, don't wait until it is too late

**Take your emergency bag**

- This should include your medications, prescriptions and any assistance equipment

**Take your animals**

- Put them on leads or in pet containers

**Know where to go**

- Follow advice on evacuations and check live traffic information
- Make your way to relatives or friends if you can
- If you go to an official evacuation centre, you can call Link2Home for Temporary Emergency Accommodation on 1800 152 152

**Look out for each other**

Share information with family, friends, and neighbours and help each other or those who may need assistance

www.myfloodrisk.nsw.gov.au



INNER SYDNEY VOICE
regional social development council



Where to find information

Useful websites to visit and phone apps to download

- Local weather updates: www.bom.gov.au and Bureau of Meteorology app
- Local ABC Radio frequency: www.reception.abc.net.au and ABC Listen app
- Flood and storm updates: www.facebook.com.au/NSW.SES
- Plan for your animals: www.getreadyanimals.nsw.gov.au
- Live traffic information: www.livetraffic.com and Live Traffic app



Need help?

For emergency help in floods call NSW SES on 132 500

In life threatening emergencies call Police/Ambulance on 000

- Hearing/speech impaired SMS NRS: 0423 677 767
- Internet Relay: <https://internet-relay.nrscall.gov.au>



My important numbers

Who would you need to contact in an emergency?

(e.g. carer, support worker, doctor, pharmacist, emergency contact, relatives, friends, Link2Home)

Name:	Phone:
Name:	Phone:
Name:	Phone:
Name:	Phone:
Name:	Phone:



My checklist

I am prepared because:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ✓ I know where to find information like weather updates, warnings and advice | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I know where I will go in an evacuation and how I will get there | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I know what I will take with me | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I have talked with my household about what we will do if we need to evacuate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I have a plan for keeping my animals safe | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I know how I will manage my health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I have talked through my plan with relatives, friends and neighbours | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ✓ I have a list of my important numbers ready | <input type="checkbox"/> |

AT - 13 Resilience Plan – High Level Review and Proposed Structure – August 2021

High level review and proposed structure for Local Resilience Plan

Resilient Hawkesbury 2030

Beyond recovery - our community and Council working together to adapt, survive and thrive

Hawkesbury 2030

Our community and Council working together to adapt survive and thrive

1. Background

There is no blueprint or template for developing a local resilience plan (the Plan). There are learnings from what others across local government have already adopted or are progressing for resilience planning, including seven in the Sydney metropolitan region.

Tools to assist councils now include the recently developed Resilience Risk Assessment (2020-2021) and draft Resilience Assessment Guide (2021) produced by the City of Sydney and now open for comment by other councils ahead of potential broader application. Also the Resilient Sydney Regional Strategy (2018) sets out the main pillars and elements for actions covering resilience against major shocks and chronic stresses challenging the community and local government.

No attempt should be made to merely replicate exemplars of local resilience plans, as the circumstances, characteristics and mix of risks and threats in the Hawkesbury LGA are unique. The Hawkesbury Plan will focus on disaster resilience planning and management including the threats from floods, bushfires, heat and severe storms as part of climate resilience and adaptation.

A proposal has been developed to progress the Plan; this includes the scope, draft objectives and structure, and recommended action plan component for the Plan. This is complemented with a draft proposed Emergency Management and Resilience Framework and Structures, which builds upon the existing framework for the organisation.

2. Scope of the Plan - beyond recovery

To complement the main title, 'Beyond recovery' at the start of a by-line (see above) would be followed by highlighting the overall goals for resilience to 'adapt, survive and thrive'. This sets a context through relevant sections and headings of the Plan in taking a more holistic approach.

The Plan will be designed to meet the unique local circumstances and settings of the Hawkesbury LGA and the operational requirements of the Council for climate and disaster resilience.

There inevitably will be many separate or distinct 'recoveries' associated with specific events that occur within a long-term time frame. The very recent major flood on the back of the catastrophic bushfires in 2019-2020 have compounded to a large scale and lengthy recovery process.

Beyond each recovery, an even greater challenge and opportunity will be strengthening resilience of the community and Council to adapt, survive and thrive. This is essential for better preparing for, withstanding, responding to, and recovering ('bounce back') from future acute shocks and disasters. These are so often magnified by compounding or cascading events and ongoing chronic stresses.

The latter means that certain sections of the community ('communities of concern') will be far more vulnerable and consequently require extra attention and support.

Within the above context scope needs to cover the strategic and operational areas of influence and responsibilities of Council alongside meeting the needs of the broader community.

The proposed approach will be a mix of prevention (including mitigation), preparedness, planning for responses and recovery when needed.

It will be strategic in nature and yet grounded in actions that empower Council as the agile local leader to work collaboratively across all operations and with the community and other stakeholders for goals, achievable well-defined targets, outcomes, and timelines.

Decisions will need to be made by Council as how to best integrate disaster planning and management into the Plan and complement with a separate recovery plan to be prepared by Council.

It will be important for the Plan to complement and fit efficiently and effectively within an overarching framework that includes the Local Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN), the HCC Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Crisis Management Team (CMT).

The Plan will be designed to complement and support other key strategies and plans of Council. These will include and yet not be restricted to Community Strategic Plan, Local Strategic Planning Statement, annual operation and four-year delivery plans, a climate risk assessment and adaptation strategy and environmental sustainability strategy.

There are also important district and regional linkages including, for example, the Western City District Plan of the Greater Sydney Commission, Resilient Sydney Strategy, Bushfire Risk Management Plan, flood plans and strategies for the catchment, and regional emergency plans and sub-plans.

3. Objectives of the Plan

The proposed draft objectives for the Plan to achieve are:

- To identify the main risks, threats, issues, challenges, and opportunities for resilience across Council's operations and community
- To set out a strategic framework to guide measures that build, encourage, facilitate, and support the strengthening of climate resilience and preparedness to better withstand acute shocks, emergency situations and disasters and chronic stresses so that the community can *adapt, survive and thrive*
- To establish an overall local vision for a *Resilient Hawkesbury 2030* and from this the goals, targets, and outcomes to be achieved across the spectrum of key response areas to be agreed upon by internal and external stakeholders.
- To present the proposed actions that Council will commit to implementing collaboratively across its operations and in partnership with the community and other organisations to help ensure future and long-term climate resilience for the city's residents, assets and infrastructure (physical, social, cultural), environmental protection and community wellbeing
- To build the capacity of Council's workforce for excellence in disaster planning, management and climate resilience
- To apply an evidence-based approach and integrate key findings from inclusive internal, community and stakeholder engagement processes to inform the outcome areas and actions with priorities, including through support for connectedness, social cohesion, collaboration and collective roles for greater resilience and recovery from major shocks and overcoming chronic stresses
- To support more vulnerable 'communities of concern' to become more resilient in collaboration with local community groups, other agencies and NGOs

4. Structure of the Plan

There are many options for the Plan structure, and it will be influenced by agreeing on the scope and objectives of the document in terms of what it is trying to achieve. If determined that it needs to move beyond policy and statement of strategic intent, then inclusion of a detailed action plan will be a minimum requirement.

The potential structure within above context would include:

- Contents
- Acknowledgements
- Executive summary
- Welcome to country
- 1. Introduction
 - What is resilience?
 - Why is it important for Hawkesbury LGA?
 - Main challenges and threats to the LGA
- 2. Characteristics of LGA including history, demographic, environment, land-use, social-cultural. Context setting - global, national, regional, district and local

Organisations

- 100RC (100 Resilient Cities), Resilient Cities Network, C40 Cities and Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy Oceania¹
- National Recovery and Resilience Agency
- Resilience NSW, SES, RFS, NSW Health, Red Cross
- Resilient Sydney, WSROC

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

- Floodplain Management Committee, Bushfire Management Committee
- HCC, local NGOs, community groups, volunteer organisations, emergency services, police, health services

Note 1:

C40 is focused on fighting climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens

Framework and structures for disaster management and resilience

- Regional and district - including Resilient Sydney Strategy, Regional EMPLAN and Regional and State sub-plans, Hawkesbury-Nepean flood strategy/plan, WSROC heat framework, District Bushfire Risk Management Plan and others
 - Local EMPLAN and others
3. Identification of main local resilience risks, threats, issues, challenges, existing strengths, and opportunities, with an emphasis on climate risks
 - Major shocks: flood, bushfire, heat, severe storms and other threats
 - Chronic stresses: climate change, energy, water and food security, COVID-19, social isolation, mental health, affordable housing, transport and others
 4. What the community and stakeholders are telling us
 - Engagement with the community and external stakeholders including residents, local groups, NGOs, agencies and adjoining councils, through surveys (YHYS), focus groups, events, meetings, social media campaigns, flyers and information sheets and other activities
 - Internal engagement with staff
 5. Local vision, strategic directions and key response areas with goals for disaster and climate resilience
 - Vision statement
 - Strategic directions based upon five pillars
 - Key response areas for action
 6. Action plan tables for key response areas based upon eight categories of actions
 - Goal, targets, outcomes, actions, lead responsibilities, partnerships, timing
 7. Monitoring and evaluation
 - Template plan with performance measures and status of implementation/completion.

Glossary of terms

References and further resources

Appendices

5. Action Plan

Without pre-empting the outcome of stakeholder engagement, examples of key response areas with eight categories of actions under the main theme of climate resilience and disaster planning and management include:

1. Climate resilience risks, extreme weather events and natural hazards
 - Integration of climate risk assessment and keeping up to date
 - Collaborative research, measurement and monitoring
2. Disaster mitigation, adaptation and preventative measures
 - Integration of climate adaptation strategies
 - Mitigation and preventative measures for assets and critical infrastructure, particularly for flood and bushfire
 - Local planning and development controls including for flood, heat, bushfire and landslip
3. Emergency preparedness
 - Community awareness campaigns

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

- Community capacity building and collaborative programs including other agencies, NGOs, local businesses and groups
 - Disaster and Emergency Dashboard
 - Development of tools for residents and especially more vulnerable 'communities of concern'
 - Place based local approaches
 - Council staff preparedness
4. Disaster response
- Overarching structure
 - Local EMPLAN, including consequence management guides
 - Emergency Operation Centre and its activation and resulting operations
 - Community alerts and information including Dashboard and other communications
 - Establishment of recovery centres and support for the community
 - Collaboration and partnerships including agencies and NGOs
 - Crisis Management Team and Business Continuity Plan
5. Community engagement and volunteers
- Building and sustaining collaboration and partnerships with local community groups and NGOs
 - Multicultural ambassadors' program
 - Spontaneous volunteers and giving framework and programs
 - Professional development for Council staff
6. Community health, wellbeing and social cohesion
- Community plans
 - Community support programs
 - Community capacity building programs
 - Collaboration and partnerships including agencies, NGOs and other councils
7. Disaster recovery
- Recovery centres and hubs for community
 - Communications and customer service for residents
 - Clean-up assistance and procedures
 - Collaboration and partnerships including agencies, NGOs and other councils
 - Federal and State government funding assistance
 - Recovery plans
 - Financial assistance to community
 - Crisis Management Team and Business Continuity Plan
8. Governance
- Collaborative and participative governance through implementation of the Plan
 - Ongoing participation in regional collaborative strategies, programs and projects
 - Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress for the Plan to share publicly online and via other mechanisms
 - Representation of community and range of external stakeholders through implementation processes

6. Next steps

What is presented in the previous five sections of this report is a draft for consideration, feedback and further discussion ahead of reaching agreement on the way forward.

Once a structure and approach are agreed upon with appropriate endorsement, a draft project plan can be prepared and communicated to stakeholders.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

As part of this process it is recommended that a working or reference group be formed of key staff to help inject an appropriate mix of different perspectives into development of the Plan. This may best be undertaken once a more advanced preliminary draft Plan had been prepared.

Such a tight group could include Resilience Planning Coordinator, LEMO, Manager Community Planning and Partnerships, Community Recovery Officer, Manager Risk Enterprise Systems, Corporate Communications and Environmental Coordinator.

Beyond this critical internal engagement phase, there will then be confidence to expand consultations to key external stakeholders groups, organisation and representatives.

AT - 14 Evacuation Centre Audit & Summary TemplateCouncil or
LEMC Logo**EVACUATION CENTRE AUDIT & SUMMARY**

GENERAL						
Centre Name:					Suburb:	
Street Address:		Telephone:		Owner:		
Contact Name:		Mobile:		Postal Address:		
Email:		AH Contact :				

CENTRE DESCRIPTION			
Capacity: Short Term (2.0m ² per person)		Facility Type:	
		Coordinates:	
Long Term (3.5m ² per person)		Time required to set up:	
Suitable as Mass Evacuation Centre			
Total Floor Area:			

RISK (if relevant)	ASSESSMENT	COMMENTS
Above Flood Height:		
Above Storm Surge:		
Tsunami Evacuation Footprint:		
Fire Risk Rating:		

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021



EVACUATION CENTRE AUDIT & SUMMARY

Council or
LEMC Logo

RESOURCE / ISSUE	INDICATOR	Yes, No or Qty	COMMENT
Alternate Centre	Alternate facility identified		
	Suitable area to establish small animal holding facilities		
Animal Holding	Suitable area to establish large animal holding facilities		
	# Commercial and/or subscription television available		
Audio Visual	# Projectors (or similar)		
	Commercial radio available		
	Public Address System		
	Other (Describe)		
Availability and access	Access available on a 24 hour basis		
	Sealed/paved access to entry		
	Key holder details confirmed		
	Disabled access available		
Bathroom facilities	# Male Toilets (Urinals/Pans)		
	# Female Toilets		
	# Parent Rooms		
	# Showers		
Centre Management	# Disabled facilities available		
	Secure area for use as the Evacuation Centre Operations Room		
Children	Additional rooms available for children's activities		

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021



EVACUATION CENTRE AUDIT & SUMMARY

Council or
LEMC Logo

RESOURCE / ISSUE	INDICATOR	Yes, No or Qty	COMMENT
Communications	Hardline Telephones available		
	Broadband Connectivity		
	Wireless Connectivity		
Display boards	Sufficient white/display boards to display public information		
Electricity	Grid Dependent		
	Alternate onsite power generation		
	Alternate offsite power available for transportation to site.		
Entertainment In situ	# televisions		
	# data projectors		
	# other (describe)		
	# Seating available on site		
Facility Furniture	Bedding furniture available on site		
	Dining furniture available on site		
	Furniture available on site is in good working condition		
	Automatic Sprinklers		
Fire Safety	Fire Extinguishers/Fire Hoses		
	Fire Blankets		
	Last Fire Certification check date (specify date in comments)		
Food Outlets	# Commercial onsite food outlets		
Helicopter Landing	Nearby Helicopter Landing Areas identified and mapped		



EVACUATION CENTRE AUDIT & SUMMARY

Council or
LEMC Logo

RESOURCE / ISSUE	INDICATOR	Yes, No or Qty	COMMENT
Information Technology	# Computers available		
	# Printers available		
	Internet connectivity available		
	# Photocopier available		
Kitchen and Dining facilities	Refrigeration appliances available		
	Cooking appliances available		
	Dish washing facilities available		
	Crockery and cutlery available		
	Food service standards compliant		
	Meal consumption area separate to sleeping/seating areas		
Outdoor Recreation	Area available to allow evacuees to participate in outdoor activities		
Parking	# onsite parking spaces available		
	# offsite parking spaces		
Psychological Services	Discrete area available for meetings and discussions		
Security	Security of centre able to be facilitated		
Sleeping area	Private and discrete area available to allow evacuees to sleep		
Special Needs	Area available for special needs groups/individuals		
Vehicle Access	All weather driveway		
	Access to main door		

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Council or
LEMIC Logo

EVACUATION CENTRE AUDIT & SUMMARY



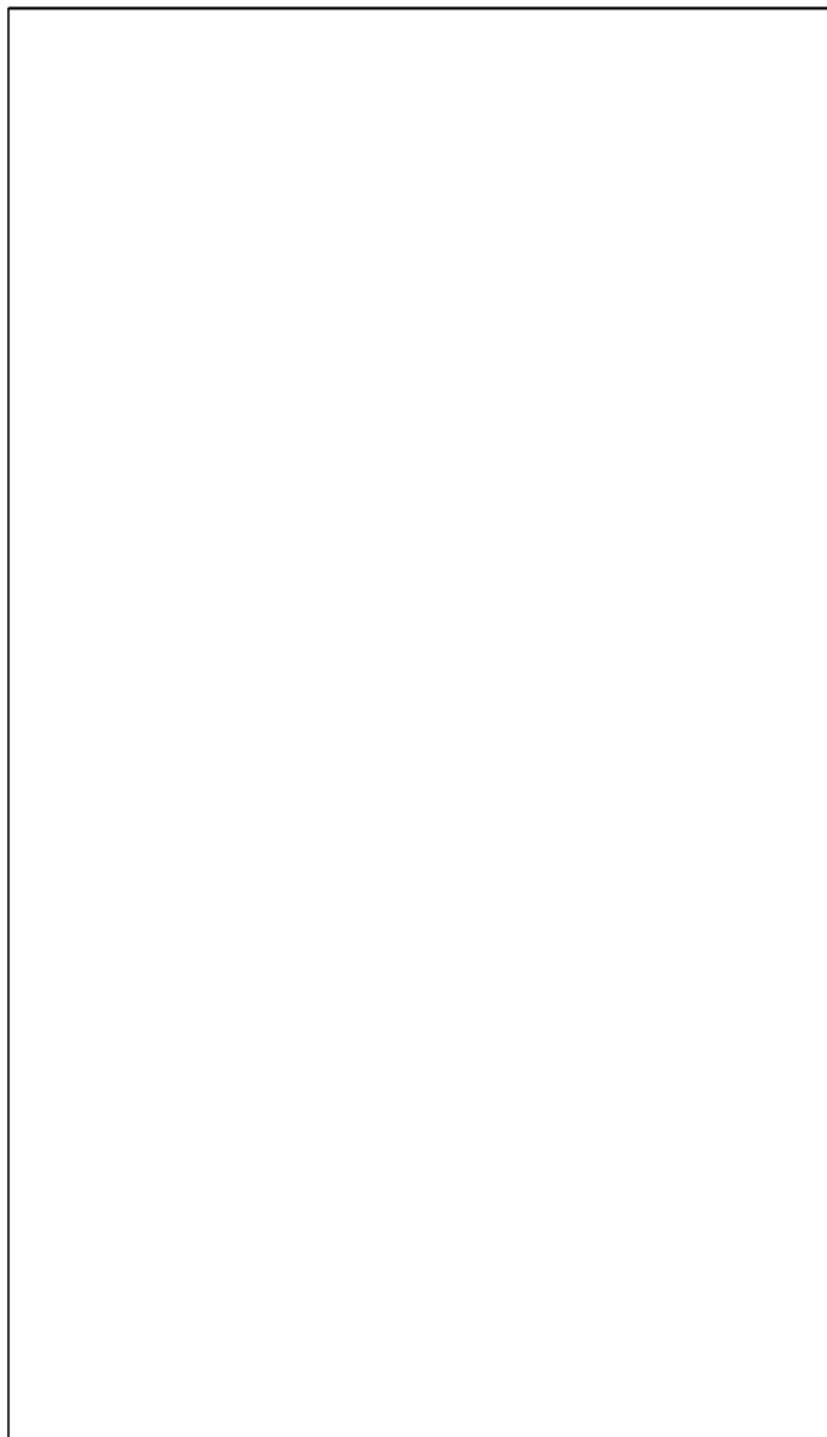
RESOURCE / ISSUE	INDICATOR	Yes, No or Qty	COMMENT
Ventilation	Emergency service pickup point		
	Natural ventilation only		
	Air Conditioning available		
	Ceiling or portable fans		
Water Supply	Mains Supply		
	Tank Supply		
	Alternate potable water supply available		
	Hot water available		
Work, Health & Safety	Cold water supply only		
	Risk assessment undertaken		
Other/General Comments			

Council or
LEMC Logo

EVACUATION CENTRE SITE/LOCALITY MAP



EVACUATION CENTRE FLOOR PLAN



AT - 15 Royal Commission Submission

Dear Mayor and Councillors

Please see Council's submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. The Commission is accepting public submissions on Australia's preparedness for, and response to, natural disasters drawing on what many Australians experienced during the 2019-20 bushfire season.

The submission is confined to the broad terms of reference and in line with the intent to identify improvements; with a specific focus on **Local governments and natural disasters**.

Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements

Question 1

- a. What information do local governments have access to and rely on in preparing natural disaster management plans, conducting risk assessments and in otherwise preparing for natural disasters?**
 - Hawkesbury City Council has sufficient information to support emergency planning
 - Resilience NSW provides support and advice in the preparation of Hawkesbury's Emergency Management Plan. This plan was developed by the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) represented by Council, Emergency Service Organisations (ESO's), relevant functional areas and key local stakeholders e.g. RAAF, based within Hawkesbury LGA
 - Information provided by local agencies and functional areas inform risk assessments that have been used to develop specific plans to manage natural disasters in the Hawkesbury e.g. Consequence Management Guides for hazards such as bushfires, riverine flooding, biological hazards etc
 - Information is also provided at a state level for high risk natural disasters e.g. Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Plan. This information further supports the development of local sub-plans e.g. Hawkesbury City Local Flood Plan
 - Council has also been provided with spatial information for use during multi-agency emergencies by Emergency Information Coordination Unit (EICU)
- b. What information do local governments rely on in assessing the impact of natural disasters?**
 - Hawkesbury City Council relies heavily on local intelligence and support from relevant combat agencies in assessing the risks and potential impact of natural disasters i.e. RFS, SES, DPI etc.
- c. How can the information available to, and relied on by, local governments be improved to assist their role in planning for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters?**
 - The focus of disaster arrangements is primarily focussed on response – what is required is a funded, coordinated and prioritised approach to planning and preparation.
 - There is a need for ongoing resilience and planning education programs within the broader community for emergency response, with the goal of having an informed community able to respond and adapt to the circumstances of any particular event.
 - Improvements to information sharing between Local, State and Federal government departments during the recovery process are required. The current 2019/20 bushfire recovery process in the Hawkesbury LGA has seen significant delays to impact assessments; lack of clarity regarding the scope and eligibility for clean up; delayed clean up; and a lack of information regarding status updates from the principal contractor.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

- The difficulties Hawkesbury City Council has faced in attempting to access information regarding these recovery activities has significantly impacted our ability to plan recovery efforts to support the community.
- d. **To what extent is the information referred to in (a) and (b) shared or coordinated with other local governments and with the community?**
 - Resilience NSW structure allows for ease of information sharing through the Regional Emergency Management Officer (REMO) and Regional Emergency Management Committee.
 - Established relationships with neighbouring LGA's allows for information sharing; particularly where the impacts of natural disaster may cross LGA boundaries and a coordinated response may be required.

Question 2

- a. **What is the responsibility of local governments for communicating with, and educating their communities about, natural disaster risks, preparedness, response and recovery?**

Hawkesbury City Council's role in **preparedness communication and education** is to:

- Provide active leadership, participation and support of numerous Community Resilience Networks e.g. Animal Ready Community (ARC), Social Housing etc, designed to educate and prepare our community for natural disasters
- Regularly share and promote natural disaster preparedness information of combat agencies e.g. RFS, SES etc, through social media and website
- Build strong relationships with emergency service organisations and promote awareness and engagement opportunities within the community e.g. inviting emergency services to community events held by Council

Hawkesbury City Council's role to communicate **during an emergency** is to:

- Reinforce consistent messaging; sharing information from the relevant combat agency e.g. RFS, SES etc
- Facilitate and support information sharing between key community stakeholders, i.e. the broader community, local communities e.g. isolated communities with specific needs, ESO's, councillors etc
- Communicate any relevant Council information; e.g. impacts on Council services, road closures etc
- Responding to information requests from the community

Hawkesbury City Council's role to communicate **during recovery**:

- Communicating with our community plays a vital role in disaster recovery; understanding the needs of impacted communities, ensuring they have the information they need to recover, and the tools and support to manage their recovery
- Provide active leadership of the Recovery Committee and Subcommittees
- Council is best placed to coordinate recovery activities at the local level; including engaging with the relevant agencies to ensure the needs of the community are met
- Hawkesbury City Council endeavours to keep the community informed of the status of recovery activities through appropriate and targeted communication channels e.g. community meetings, one on one meetings etc

- b. **How is this put into effect?**

- Using all available communication channels; digital media, website, signage, posters, media releases, community meetings, newsletters, targeted emails, handouts, Mayoral message, community radio
- Closely monitoring and sharing combat agency messaging
- Building strong relationships with other agencies; particularly Resilience NSW

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

c. How could this communication and education be improved?

- The community look to Council in the initial stages of recovery. Support at a State level can be delayed and local government is left to fill the information gaps for impacted communities. State government planning could be improved to allow more rapid deployment of resources to support recovery efforts
- An awareness or education program for the community regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various emergency service organisations during natural disasters; understand “what they can expect” from the various agencies during a natural disaster
- Educating the community regarding the activation of evacuation centres; reinforcing the need for the community to be resilient and have a plan for the various types of emergencies that regularly occur in the Hawkesbury – helping the community understand the importance of resilience and that evacuation centres are a last resort

Question 3

Are local governments provided with sufficient guidance, training and standards to perform their role in relation to natural disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery?

- Hawkesbury City Council is provided with sufficient guidance through the Emergency Risk Management framework supported by Resilience NSW
- Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) members are trained in mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery to varying levels relevant to their respective agency
- Committee members on the LEMC are also able to undergo training in a suite of Resilience NSW training courses; specifically emergency management modules from introductory concepts, Emergency Operations Centre concepts and evacuation management.
- Hawkesbury City Council would be better placed to have a funded, dedicated resource to be able to perform our role in relation to natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Our LGA is at high risk of natural disaster i.e. bushfire and flood, and would benefit from a permanent resource to be able to plan, communicate and educate the community as part of a wider resilience initiative.

Question 4

How can local governments ensure accountability for, and compliance with, land-use planning or hazard management obligations designed to mitigate and increase resilience to natural hazard risks?

- This requires a collaborative effort between property owners, local council and in some cases State Government.
- Local Government can undertake land use planning that identifies at risk areas and these plans inform development approvals. Council however is not in a position or resourced to undertake ongoing monitoring of compliance with DA approvals i.e. asset protection zones being maintained. There needs to be an ongoing community campaign that property owners need to undertake hazard reduction measures on an ongoing basis.
- If property borders areas such as National Parks then Council could act as a facilitator between State Government and property owners to manage hazards e.g. fencing, weed control etc
- Hawkesbury City Council is a member of the Hawkesbury Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) and work with the committee to plan hazard reductions and asset protection zones within council managed land. In addition we work with the BFMC in developing community protection plans.
- Hawkesbury City Council continue to work with volunteers to undertake bush care management, ensure key infrastructure is maintained to allow evacuation, install signage, clear fire trails etc

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Question 5

- a. **What is the responsibility of local governments for evacuation, evacuation centres and safe places?**
 - Hawkesbury City Council, with the support of the agencies involved in the LEMC, has identified suitable evacuations centres at strategic locations across the LGA designed to cater for a variety of natural disasters e.g. bushfire, flood etc.
 - Identified evacuation centres are assessed for suitability; coordinated through the LEMC to ensure the facilities meet the various needs of evacuees including security, health and welfare etc
 - Hawkesbury City Council provides logistics support to the LEOCON during evacuations e.g. provide access to identified evacuation locations, provide support to local road closures required to facilitate evacuations, communicate with the community during evacuations etc
- b. **How could these arrangements, including with respect to coordination between local governments, be improved?**
 - Investment by State Government in the identification and upgrade (as required) of suitable evacuation centres
 - State Government support is required to establish a more agile, experienced team that can be rapidly deployed to provide support to evacuated communities. Evacuation centres and designated safe places activated during natural disasters require staffing by trained and experienced personnel to support impacted communities; currently this is left to local resources that are already stretched due to their active involvement in managing the response phase.
 - Coordinated approach to animal evacuation; specifically sharing facilities with neighbouring Council areas provides increased access to suitable evacuation locations and efficient use of limited resources to support evacuees e.g. Greater Sydney Local Land Services personnel

Question 6

- a. **What is the responsibility of local governments for assisting the community with relief and recovery from natural disasters?**
 - Hawkesbury City Council has played a lead role in assisting the community in the recovery process
 - The level of support required by Council of State and Federal government, Resilience NSW and other agencies is dependent upon the scale of the natural disaster and the impact on the community
 - Hawkesbury City Council's communication with the community plays a vital role in disaster recovery; ensuring impacted communities have the information they need to recover, and the tools and support required to manage their recovery
- b. **How do local governments coordinate relief and recovery assistance with other local governments, Australian, state and territory governments, charities and community groups?**
 - The establishment of the Greater Sydney Regional Recovery Committee was a significant benefit to local recovery efforts. The regional committee was able to influence the availability of expertise and resources across multiple agencies; which may not have been possible if managed at a local level.
- c. **How could these arrangements be improved?**
 - Specialist support in the development of a Local Recovery Plan
 - The provision of State/Federal funding for permanent disaster management and community resilience personnel for either a local or restricted regional area to provide the necessary continuity and response capability for and between events. This was highlighted by the

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

impacts of a succession of emergencies in the Hawkesbury i.e. COVID pandemic, extreme storms and riverine flooding and bushfires, all compounding the impacts on the community, environment and the local economy

- Improved information sharing between State and Local Government authorities during the recovery process; the difficulties Hawkesbury City Council has faced in attempting to access information regarding State managed recovery activities has at times hampered local recovery efforts

AT - 16 NSW Bushfire Inquiry Submission

NSW Bushfire Inquiry Submission

This submission to the NSW Inquiry is restricted in its intent to matters associated with the Gospers Mountain Fire in NSW and its relevance to the Hawkesbury City Council area. It is also limited to broad issues affecting the community and Council in its ability to manage the emergency and its outcomes. Specific responses from other combat and response agencies are considered to be principally addressed by those bodies where detailed knowledge of issues outside of Council's expertise is held.

1.1 Causes and Contributing Factors

Whilst the cause of the fire is attributable to a single source lightning strike, the behaviour was considered to be highly influenced by the extreme weather conditions of low moisture, high temperatures and wind shifts.

These factors combined with geography in a manner which saw the fire expand onto multiple fronts which in turn meant that the fire was expanding regardless of wind directions i.e. favourable conditions on one front meant unfavourable conditions elsewhere.

1.2 Preparation and Planning

Significant and targeted hazard reduction has occurred in accordance with the Bushfire Risk Management Plan over a number of years. Whilst implementation of planned burns has, in part, been partly limited in some recent years due to adverse conditions in winter months, the effects of completed hazard reduction activities in protecting properties in this fire has been demonstrated within the Hawkesbury Fire Control District.

This is not to say that further planning and preparation is not warranted.

Increased State funding for maintenance of fire trails on an annual, prioritised basis would enable critical planning and resourcing to be applied to other critical priorities rather than resourcing and mobilising heavy plant to establish degraded routes in the face of fire activity.

Whilst brigades have water storage capability at their stations, as well as at key fire containment points, funding to provide enhanced storage at stations as well as potentially on key fire trails would be highly advantageous in reducing resupply chain times.

As a result of the prevailing drought conditions many property owners sought to refill their own bulk containers (IBCs) at a limited number of filling points, often long distances from their property. Improved access/rapid refill should be considered should these circumstances combine again. This should be weighed against the utility and desirability of encouraging property owners to effectively combat catastrophic fire conditions. Establishment of dedicated filling points for RFS bulk water tankers (for use in emergencies only) would address conflict and priority.

There was a clear need demonstrated during the event that the Hawkesbury Fire Control Centre requires a new purpose built facility to enable it to combat and coordinate future firefighting most effectively. The current inadequate facility required the installation of demountable buildings to accommodate the additional logistical and planning support teams. This involved the annexation

of the adjoining public school playground for over three months. It is highly desirable that a future facility incorporate an Emergency Operations Centre on site, but operating semi autonomously from the Incident Management Team. This would reduce the demand on Liaison Officer provision as well as provide enhanced intelligence and data sharing for supporting emergency responses.

1.3 Response to Bushfires

Whilst the scale and duration of this fire was by any measure extreme, it must be stated that despite hundreds of thousands of hectares of bushland being burnt, the RFS' ability to defend many dwellings must be considered a major success and achievement.

In achieving this the local knowledge of brigade personnel was instrumental, along with the out of area resourcing made available.

Improved coordination of road closures was identified as a matter for review. The increased reliance on private traffic control contractors combined with often limited mobile phone communications in remote areas and changing fire ground activity meant that access was, at times uncoordinated, with local resident access being denied for longer than necessary.

Improved protocols for the use of Live Traffic as the principal source of up to date traffic closures (and reopenings) should be developed and be agnostic to whether a road is a Local or State road.

Telecommunications has been a longstanding issue within the Hawkesbury Local Government Area and affects the emergency response capacity. Due to size and terrain mobile phone coverage is limited in many areas. During the fire event landlines were also affected by fire and tree damage to overhead cabling. Difficulties were also experienced with telephone exchange power supply.

Enhanced line maintenance and clearance by the telecommunication providers would improve the communications as would expansion of the mobile phone network. This would provide a sound basis for future GPS vehicle location and tracking systems.

The variable nature of bush fire impacts as well as other emergency situations such that improved facility capability to manage community needs and support.

Enhancements to existing community centres such as the North Richmond Community Centre would enable the rapid establishment of Disaster Welfare points where initial triage/assessment of needs can be undertaken.

Similarly funding to establish appropriate infrastructure to manage the relocation of housing of large animals, particularly horses, is highly desirable.

The use of Hawkesbury Showground, which provided this capability during the fire event, highlighted the need to have suitable accommodation, security and animal welfare response at an early stage of a fire event.

In relation to the Recovery Phase, there have been delays in providing clean up actions and resources.

Whilst it is understandable that damage assessment capacity was stretched across the State, and that there is a need to ensure the accountability for

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

public expenditure under the Commonwealth / State funding arrangements, more timely and closer engagement with Council would address a number of aspects.

This includes the need to ensure that the scope of cleanup and dangerous tree removal is resolved early.

Many property owners have only just been advised of approval / rejection of clean up eligibility. Early advice on scope / eligibility would have enabled early entry by Council to remove tree hazards not ultimately covered by the restricted clean up scope.

A key focus for the future must be on developing resilience through planning, infrastructure provision and ongoing training and continuity planning for emergency and other agency personnel.

There is a need for enhanced and ongoing resilience and planning campaigns within the community for emergency response in general, with the goal of having an informed community able to respond to and adapt to the circumstances of any particular event.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

AT - 17 MacDonald Valley Submission

Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20
Public Hearing Program
Wednesday, 28 April 2021

Stephen Brown –

- Community member Macdonald Valley, Hawkesbury NSW 2775
- Past President Macdonald Valley Association FY 2017-2020 through the fires and until late 2020
- Volunteer firefighter NSW Rural Fire Service, St Albans Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade. Formerly on the brigade executive team and training officer (2019-2020)

Macdonald Valley – The communities of Macdonald Valley and village of St Albans, are located along the Macdonald River, Webbs Creek, Wrights Creek and Mogo Creek and stretches over valley areas of approximately 35km x 10km and surrounded by National Parks. The valley is located 1.5 hours / 73 km from Richmond (this meeting place) by main road and ferry or gravel road. This is a historic and remote rural community of the Hawkesbury and Greater Sydney. The village is St Albans RFS fire shed, School of Arts Hall, church, a pub and some residential properties. The 2016 census summary below provides a snapshot, however does not illustrate the material proportion of residents who are non-permanent:

- | | | | |
|--------------|------|-------------------------|--------------|
| • People | 596 | • All private dwellings | 349 |
| • Median Age | 50.5 | • People per household | -1~2.5 range |
| • Families | 140 | | |

2019 / 2020 Fires (and more)

The 2019/20 fire season was one amongst number of events that have cumulatively impacted the wellbeing and resilience of the community - ongoing drought, Gospers Mountain Fire, significant floods in February 2020 and March 2021 and Covid isolation, isolation from services, recurrent phone and electricity outages and car ferry out of service. Collectively these events justify the extension of funded wellbeing and recovery programs to embed change benefits.

The community has been generally aware that a fire event was due, the ongoing drought, fuel loads, weather conditions and time elapsed since the last major fires all directed community attention to when, rather than if.

Our community coexisted with the fires from early November 2019 until mid-January 2020, as an RFS firefighter the duty period for me and many of our community was in the order of 8 weeks. The Macdonald River was the focus for a containment line fire break, as the eastern boundary of the Gospers Mountain fire, preventing progress to the Central Coast. Our crews put in a tactical backburns of possibly 120-150km over many weeks as the fire situation evolved. As we progressed we also had to cope with the evolving confluence of additional fires at Three Mile Creek, Wrights Creek, Thompsons Run and Little L Complex.

The Committees particular interest, that I've been advised of, are addressed later in this commentary. The following key issues, that I and other community voices want to highlight, provide the Committee to understanding of action required on a number of issues that will support and sustain an even more resilient community, better able to flex with situations:

1

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20

Public Hearing Program

Wednesday, 28 April 2021

1. **Communications Infrastructure Failure** – ***ACTION: comprehensive overhaul and investment***
2. **Emergency Plan and Safer Places** – ***ACTION: develop and implement***
3. **Fire Information Communication** – ***ACTION: improve and refine***
4. **Response & Recovery** – ***ACTION: develop and sustain***

1. Communications Infrastructure Failure – ***ACTION: comprehensive overhaul and investment***

Failures are impacting life safety and the community's resilience. Ongoing landline phone failures through floods, fires and day-to-day and lack of mobile phone coverage were a point of feedback in the Macdonald Valley Association Wellbeing Survey 2020, highlighting impacts on wellbeing.

- **Landline** – The community has a failing and unreliable landline service. Telstra, in the experience of the community, is failing its Universal Service Obligation (USO) and not delivering their obligation for 'giving customers access to a reliable telephone service that has good voice reception and ensures connections and faults associated with this service are undertaken and repaired within a reasonable time.' Consumer safeguards
- **Black Spot Mobile** – Optus has failed to deliver on Round 2 Optus funded project (MBSP2-NSW-028) announced 2017, meaning that for multiple fire seasons and flood events the community's isolation has continued, contrary to the Minister's and programs promises.
- **Fire Vehicle Communications (PMR)** – Inadequate coverage / range of RFS' private (government) radio network resulted in crews fireground safety being compromised on an ongoing basis.
- **UHF (CB) Radio** – An initiative by community is to create a backbone of a UHF (CB) radio network networking of isolated residents. UHF is limited in range and requires relay infrastructure to support coverage which we'll be seeking funding for.

2. Emergency Plan and Safer Places – ***ACTION: develop and implement***

Hawkesbury's lack of a communicated, scalable EMPLAN is evident in how emergencies are managed in an ad-hoc way in small communities such as ours. Top down emergency management arrangements need to be in place to ensure that agencies and community work together and are effectively coordinated before, during and after an emergency.

- **Community Emergency Response Plan** – As a community we can take greater responsibility to participate in building a safer and more resilient community and to establish a localised program to enable our community, emergency management agencies, Council and other partners to work together as part of the community before, during and after emergencies. For greatest success this should fall under an umbrella of local EMPLAN funded program.
- **Community safer place** – Identifying and establishment of community safer place or place of refuge is vital for use in fire and floods, depending on levels of property isolation in different circumstances. By default, the fire shed is the go-to location but its limited resources are not sufficient or appropriate for dual operational and refuge purposes. Typically, a community or church hall or school premises might be capable of improvement in facilities and services to provide this function.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20

Public Hearing Program

Wednesday, 28 April 2021

- **Property (fire / flood) safety plan**—As an adjunct to a Community plan, a pro forma guided template for use by residences, businesses, farming operations, including safe places, animal safety / welfare, helicopter landing places etc, assessment of how safe a property is using guides such as land clearance etc.
- **Prevention** – see separate comments on HR's and Aerial suppression
- **Preparation** —A finding of Macdonald Valley Association Wellbeing Survey 2020 is that *'Services that people asked for included: preparation for the fire season (52%)' of the 107 respondents, noting that "Almost 80% of responses came from residents aged 51 to 80 years of age "*. RFS has an annual Get Ready campaign, which does generate community awareness, however the ability to undertake the scope and scale of preparations is sometimes beyond community members, and this sometimes evident out on the fireground.

3. Fire Information Communication - ACTION: improve and refine

- **Fires Near Me** – RFS' App provides macro level information but failed with the scale and fire fronts of Gospers Mountain. Community members regularly sought briefings in our fire shed based on RFS Common Operating Picture (COP) and linescan updates for the fire front. Access to localised status information, differentiating active / fire front and burnt / blacked out areas is more informative and of greater use to residents and business operators.
- **Local versus Central Information & Briefings** – Local community briefings were occasionally provided and regular brigade updates were provided on social media and email channels. These updates did however differ from centralised media briefings, in the detail and localised content, a greater benefit to on the ground community members.
- **Emergency Broadcasts** – As emergency broadcaster ABC fulfilled a function that was challenged by the scale of the Gospers Mountain fire, the various fire fronts and evolving conditions at a local level. For this reason, its value in delivering critical information was sometimes diminished.
- **RFS / LGA boundary issues** – Being on the boundary of Hawkesbury, Central Coast and Cessnock LGA's we experienced evident gaps in communications and responsibilities. This was particularly evident in incident management of Three Mile and Wrights Creek with Central Coast stepping in without proper engagement or communications locally.
- **Apps and tools** – Community members were so keen for localised information that they sought out alternate apps to listen in to Emergency Broadcasts and access linescan fireground imagery, highlighting the shortfall in localised communication.

4. Response and Recovery - ACTION: develop and sustain

- **Response** – Macdonald River was a containment line for the easterly front of the fire and for some weeks, St Albans RFS Station was a 24/7 staging area. The focus for firefighters was to create a containment line by backburning perhaps 120km-150km around properties, along roads and connecting containment alongside valleys and gullies to stop the approaching fire fronts. Firefighting resources were scaled to meet the needs and competing demands. Over the two months regular volunteer firefighter provided some 110 crewed shifts, supported by

3

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20

Public Hearing Program

Wednesday, 28 April 2021

ad-hoc station operations volunteers. The emergency response was overall well regarded, albeit gaps and lessons learned did evolve.

- **Recovery** – Whilst the fires impacted the community, they did not cause the extent of a destruction and loss as experiences in other communities. However, the compounding effect of multiple experiences of many is summarised in the finding of Macdonald Valley Association Wellbeing Survey 2020 *“There is no doubt 2020 has been a tough year for the community of Macdonald Valley. The results show that this community was greatly affected by droughts, fires, smoke, floods and COVID-19. Over 40% of the population report that they are still feeling the effects of these challenging events. Unexpected stress has been a problem for more than a third of the respondents (including serious illness, drop in income and death of a loved one).”*
- **Service Provider networks** – In retrospect the historic lack of connectedness of service providers and agencies appears to be an impact on success of the programs. Recovery was from a standing start rather than building on a base of local knowledge and networks.
- **Equitable access** – There are instances of inequitable access to funds and programs from recovery programs. Some property owners required to personally draw off insurance and pay excesses for repairs and other residents with access to grant or donation funding, sometimes this may be differentiated on the basis of a property not being a principle residence.
- **Animals and wildlife** – The proper planning for the phases of emergency that also affect farm, domestic and wildlife were somewhat disjointed. Improved community and resident level planning will facilitate better management for domestic and farm animals. For wildlife a program of awareness training, resourcing and fireground safety training may facilitate opportunities for better response and care.

In relation to the Committee's particular areas of interest the following comment is offered:

Hazard reduction – including existing hazard reduction practices (the possibilities for future hazard reduction regimes) and indigenous burning practices and their efficacy. **Comment** –

- The Macdonald Valley has a slow but evolving program for Hazard Reduction (HRs) addressing the interface of properties, asset (structures) protection and the NPWS / Crown lands.
- Anecdotally the conduct of HRs in the prior 2-5 years did not appear to influence a reduced fire performance / impact and afford mitigation as the fuel loads had re-developed.
- Historically farmers conducted very regular lower intensity winter burns from the valley floor into the hills (National Parks), to manage fuel load and provide winter grazing, somewhat more akin to indigenous practices.
- There is no transparent and accessible program for HRs and fire mitigation for the vast footprints of the National Parks / Crown lands encircling the region.
- A more ambitious NPWS agency/department resourced and RFS locally consulted planning and execution framework could deliver greater mitigation preparation. If combined with encouragement and facilitation of local land owner small HRs, the combined efforts may lead to greater levels of preparedness.

DISASTER AND EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 7 September 2021

Inquiry into lessons to be learned in relation to the Australian bushfire season 2019-20
Public Hearing Program
Wednesday, 28 April 2021

The 2019-20 bushfire season – *and the level of recovery one year on (including the progress and status of recovery efforts).* **Comment –**

- Undoubtedly the fires impacted wellbeing, financially, and community. The Macdonald Valley Associations community survey identified a number of underlying issues, albeit that may reflect the confluence of a number of contributing factors).
- The 2019/20 fire season was a just one amongst number of events that have cumulatively impacted the wellbeing of community - ongoing drought, Gospers Mountain Fire, February 2020 floods, Covid isolation, March 2021 floods. Collectively they call for the extension of funded programs to embed change benefits.

Mitigation infrastructure and land-use planning – *including an assessment of the types (and costs) of mitigation infrastructure that would effectively reduce risk in fire-prone areas.* **Comment –**

- From local experience the network of local fire trails, providing access within National Park areas and opportunity for potential control lines, do not appear to undergo regular maintenance where they are susceptible to erosion and deterioration. Improving fire trails would potentially support containment in the National Park. However operationally this too needs consideration, for safe movement and escape by crews, a situation I've experienced where a decision was made to halt a planned fire trail backburn during the Gospers Mountain fire due to accessibility and safe escape path for multiple vehicles.
- Tactical clearing was undertaken by bulldozer, to create fire breaks to protect assets, rather than pre-emptively as a strategy for mitigation by control lines. This approach, when remote, necessitates attendant crewed fire vehicle resources as operational oversight, at a critical time.
- Remote mitigation, utilizing fire requires both dry firefighting and establishment of water supply points potentially with aerial support.

Insurance issues – the effects of fires on insurance premiums in fire affected regions (one year on from the 2019-20 fire season). **Comment –**

- No awareness of an impact / increase in premiums.

Aerial firefighting – including the establishment of a sovereign aerial firefighting fleet, the use of aerial resources and early suppression. **Comment –**

- If Gospers Mountain fire had been able to be attended to immediately it started we would have been in a better position. In contrast, in late October 2019 St Albans RFS+ other ground and aerial resources attended the very remote Boree Track fires for a couple of days to extinguish it and stop it growing into a bigger issue. Experience tells us aerial support is a necessary requirement for suppression in hill / inaccessible country and access to on-standby aerial firefighting resources will undoubtedly support prompt management and containment, with support of other firefighting resources.

5

oooO END OF REPORT Oooo



disaster and emergency committee

end of business paper

This business paper has
been produced
electronically to reduce
costs, improve efficiency
and reduce the use of
paper. Internal control
systems ensure it is an
accurate reproduction of
Council's official copy of
the business paper.