

IMPLEMENTING THE
GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE
TO THE
2009 VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES
ROYAL COMMISSION
MAY 2011

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LETTER FROM THE PREMIER

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were one of Australia's worst natural disasters. The bushfires devastated many lives, families, communities and vast tracts of land. The fires left a scar on our community, our landscape and our history and the impact is still being felt by many.

The subsequent 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission worked tirelessly, with compassion and commitment, to recommend steps which needed to be taken to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. The Royal Commission comprehensively considered aspects of bushfire safety as diverse as electricity infrastructure and community warnings systems, culminating in its findings and 67 recommendations in July 2010.

The Government supports all of the Royal Commission's recommendations in the Final Report and is committed to implementing each of them. The Victorian Government is making major investments and reforms to the way Victoria prepares for, and responds to, bushfires.

In total, the Victorian Government will invest over \$900 million in response to the Final Report. This Implementation Plan is the next step in delivering on our commitment to improve the way Victoria prepares for bushfires and provides further detail on how and when each commitment will be implemented.

Although many of these commitments bring early improvements, our Government will sustain its efforts over the long-term to ensure that there is no complacency about future bushfire risks faced by Victoria. We are committed to delivering on our actions and having transparent accountability for our performance. We have legislated for an independent Implementation Monitor, who will report to the community and the Parliament on our performance in delivering the measures under this Plan.

A central message of the Royal Commission's Final Report was the importance of sharing the responsibility for bushfire safety. All tiers of government, our emergency services and the broader community have a role to play in improving bushfire safety. Our Government is committed to this approach.

Victoria owes it to those who died in the fires and their families to ensure that the Royal Commission's recommendations are implemented effectively and promptly. This Plan is our Government's commitment to continuing to support affected communities; to rebuilding; and to ensuring the lessons from 2009 are never forgotten.

Ted Baillieu MLA
Premier

LETTER FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER

Black Saturday was a terrible day on which 173 people lost their lives.

That tragic day, along with the Gippsland fires in January 2009, destroyed 2,133 homes, devastated communities and businesses, damaged infrastructure and burnt out about 430,000 hectares of land.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's work centred on the need to avoid a repeat of this tragedy and the goal of making the protection of human life the key priority of the State's bushfire policy.

We know with absolute certainty that Victoria will experience such fast-moving and potentially lethal bushfires again in the future. Indeed, as the Commission found, such fires may be more frequent and intense due to probable climate change and pose greater risks to people and communities through population growth and change on the urban-rural interface.

For these reasons, it is imperative that the Government, emergency services, local councils, communities, households and individuals learn the lessons from those dreadful events and make sure we are better prepared for the inevitable return of such fires.

This Implementation Plan sets out the Government's response to the Royal Commission's reports. It includes over 250 measures to improve our ability to mitigate, prepare and plan for, respond to and recover from future bushfires. It is a plan backed by an investment of over \$900 million.

As the Royal Commission's Final Report highlights, the Government and fire services alone cannot ensure the community's safety from future bushfires.

Although we are still in the shadows of the horror of the 2009 bushfires, after two relatively benign summers one can already sense growing complacency in the community about the threat of fire. As has been so tragically shown, such complacency can have devastating consequences.

We, as a State, need to confront the ever-present threat of bushfires. We must first accept the inevitability of fires as a reality. We must then properly prepare our communities to accommodate the threat and educate people as to the need to prepare to survive a fire. We must also act as a Government to manage the threat of bushfire and properly equip people and our emergency services to respond to them when they occur. This Implementation Plan is the foundation of the Coalition Government's strategy to deliver a State better prepared for catastrophic fires in the future.

Peter Ryan MLA
Deputy Premier
Minister for Bushfire Response

OVERVIEW

Victoria's climate, vegetation and topography make it one of the most bushfire-prone areas in the world.

The State has a tragic history of fast-moving bushfires of ferocious intensity. Almost once a generation, such fires have claimed lives and had a destructive and devastating impact on communities.¹

In providing their Final Report to the Governor and people of Victoria, the Commissioners indicated their "recommendations ... give priority to protecting human life, and ... are designed to reflect the shared responsibility that governments, fire agencies, communities and individuals have for minimising the prospect of a tragedy of this scale ever happening again."

These two central principles form the cornerstone of the Government's response to the Commission's recommendations.

The following key themes also emerged from the Commission's reports. They provide a strategic framework for the Government's response to the Commission's reports and recommendations (as set out in this Implementation Plan).

1. Preventing bushfires

Bushfires are ignited by a variety of causes. Some causes are natural, such as lightning strikes, and others result from human activity.

While it is not possible to stop all bushfires, much can be done to prevent their occurrence. In the context of the Commission's recommendations, such measures include those designed to:

- stop or reduce arson – recommendations 35-36; and
- reduce ignitions caused by electricity asset failures – recommendations 27-34. These recommendations involve a series of measures to address the risk of electricity starting fires in the shorter term together with proposed longer term changes to the State's electricity distribution infrastructure. The Government has established a taskforce, as the Commission suggested, to investigate the costs and benefits of a full range of, and make recommendations on, infrastructure options.

2. Reducing the impact of bushfires

Bushfires in Victoria are inevitable. However, measures can be taken to lessen the intensity of such fires and better protect the community from their impact.

At a Government level, the State, its agencies and local councils aim to minimise the impact of bushfires through:

¹ See Commission's *Final Report*, vol 1, Appendix C, pp. 350-353.

- reducing the fuel load on public land (while monitoring and carefully managing the ecological consequences of such activity) – recommendations 56-59;
- maintaining strategic fuel breaks to protect communities and critical community assets such as water supplies;
- improving the management of fuel on roadsides – recommendations 60-62;
- limiting known fire-starting activities on days with a dangerous fire risk;
- restricting developments in extreme bushfire risk locations and requiring that buildings be constructed to a standard commensurate with the bushfire risk posed by the surrounding environment – recommendations 37-45, 47-50 and 52-55; and
- encouraging people living in unacceptably high bushfire risk areas to relocate to safer environments – recommendation 46.

At a household level, residents have a responsibility to manage their properties to reduce the risk of death, injury and property damage that bushfires can cause. Such measures involve reducing fuel loads and creating defensible space around homes before and during fire seasons (recommendations 1 and 2) and can also include retrofitting existing dwellings so they can better withstand bushfires (recommendation 51).

3. Improving planning and preparation for bushfires

Better planning and preparation is critical to reducing the consequences of bushfires. This requires a concerted and on-going effort at all levels – from individuals and households to communities, municipalities, regions and the State.

The Fire Services Commissioner has released a Bushfire Safety Policy Framework. Its foremost priority is protecting human life and improving people's safety. It sets the broad strategic framework for promoting community awareness, understanding and action; bushfire preparation and planning; and community information and warnings and introduces a broad range of bushfire safety options to assist individuals and communities to make informed decision about their safety (recommendations 1–5).

The Government, fire services and local councils have an important role in engaging the community to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding of bushfire risks, and how to manage these risks. To that end, the Government and fire services will continue their extensive community education and engagement program (recommendation 2).

Similarly, to guard against the risk of growing complacency as memories of the 2009 fires fade, the State is also committed to introducing bushfire history and safety into the school curriculum (recommendation 6) and supporting the Commonwealth in developing a national bushfire awareness campaign (recommendation 7).

The Commission emphasised – and the Government acknowledges - the importance of local planning tailored to local needs and the need to build stronger partnerships with, and provide better support to, local councils in the planning processes. To that end, the Government has:

- provided the Municipal Association of Victoria and 34 local councils with funding for 30 staff to boost their emergency management capability and capacity;
- asked the Country Fire Authority to improve the level of local government and community engagement in the development of township protection plans;

- established a grants program to fund works to establish bushfire shelters in areas where it has proved difficult; and
- directed the Fire Services Commissioner to review Victoria's current fire and emergency planning arrangements and make recommendations on how they can be rationalised and strengthened. Recognising the dangers in "trying to win the last war", lessons learnt from the recent Victorian floods will also be taken into account as part of this review.

4. Enhancing capacity and capability to respond to bushfires

The Commission considered that improved operational performance of Victoria's fire services was an absolute priority, including:

- development of common operational policy and standards;
- stronger coordination and unambiguous command and control;
- greater interoperability;
- strengthened capacity to provide an integrated response; and
- development and implementation of an ongoing reform program.

The principal focus of the new Fire Services Commissioner is to promote and lead reform in the fire services to deliver that improved operational performance and the capacity for the three fire services to operate as one integrated force to prepare for and manage major fires (recommendation 63). The reform program will build on the Commission's findings and recommendations and deliver sustainable long-term community safety outcomes by:

- building capacity and capability;
- achieving genuine interoperability between the fire services; and
- increasing organisational and community resilience.

Quick and heavy initial attack on fires is often effective in preventing their spread and the devastation they can cause. However, not all fires can be controlled. In these cases, issuing warnings and information to the community becomes the absolute priority. Such information and warnings must be timely, relevant and tailored to help community members make informed decisions about their safety.

The Government has invested heavily in enhancing:

- fire intelligence gathering, analysis and predictive capabilities including the new Phoenix RapidFire simulation tool, which provides up to six hours warning of the direction, speed and intensity of a fire within minutes, rather than hours, of its detection (recommendation 16);
- staffing, training, volunteer support, fire-fighter safety, procedures, technology, equipment and facilities in incident and emergency management and on the fire-ground (recommendations 9-15, 17-19 and 21-26);
- arrangements for pre-deploying incident management teams on dangerous fire risk days (recommendation 8) and despatching fire-fighting aircraft (recommendation 20);
- community information about forecast dangerous fire conditions; and

- warning systems, most notably the One Source-One Message tool that enables Incident Controllers to broadcast warnings to multiple sources and the Emergency Alert telephone messaging system (recommendation 1).

The value of community information and warnings is immeasurably increased when received by a well-informed and prepared community. Again this underscores the importance of the Government and fire services' education and engagement efforts and the key principle of "shared responsibility".

The Government will also overhaul the way the fire services are funded through the introduction of a fairer and more equitable property-based levy (recommendation 64).

While these reforms relate to bushfires, the recent Victorian floods point to the need for a broader examination of the State's emergency management arrangements. In that context, the Government has sought the emergency management sector's advice on what other changes need to be made to lift Victoria's capacity and capability in an "all hazards" context.

5. Recovering

The 2009 bushfires devastated many Victorian communities. Government at all levels together with the community and private sectors have made an intense effort to assist communities, households and individuals to get back on their feet. There are positive signs of recovery and remarkable community resilience. However, the longer term impact of these tragic fires and extended nature of the recovery process should not be underestimated.

The Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority is being wound up and the Government has established a new Fire Recovery Unit in Regional Development Victoria as the key contact point in the Victorian Government for affected communities. The Unit will also continue to deliver some of Authority's services with "mainstream" agencies running other continuing services. The transition of these services back into the business of the agencies is an important step in the recovery journey.

Lessons learnt from the recovery process will also be used to improve future recovery arrangements as a key aspect of managing the consequences of emergencies for communities (Chapter 8).

6. Continuing to learn and improve

The Commission has provided valuable insights into how bushfire management in Victoria can be improved. However, given the inevitability of future bushfires, it is vital that we continue to learn and improve our capacity to live with fire. A renewed commitment to research – physical, biological and social research – is critical to this aim and the Government strongly supports the Commission's recommendation to establish a national centre for bushfire research (recommendation 65).

This Plan sets out the Government's actions in response to the Commission's reports. However, those actions should not be viewed as the end of the story. Instead, they should be regarded as the first step in an ongoing process to improve Victoria's ability to live with fire and manage its potentially deadly consequences.

7. Accountability

This Plan sets out an extensive range of measures the Government has taken, will take or proposes to take to improve Victoria's ability to prevent, reduce the consequences of, prepare and plan for and respond to future bushfires.

To ensure that focus is not lost on this important work and keep the community informed of progress, the Government has appointed Mr Neil Comrie AO APM to monitor, assess and report on the progress of the implementation efforts (recommendation 66). Mr Comrie is required to report to Parliament by 31 July 2011 and again by 31 July 2012.

CHAPTER ONE – VICTORIA'S BUSHFIRE SAFETY POLICY

RECOMMENDATION 1

The State revise its bushfire safety policy. While adopting the national Prepare. Act. Survive. framework in Victoria, the policy should do the following:

- 1.1 enhance the role of warnings - including providing for timely and informative advice about the predicted passage of a fire and the actions to be taken by people in areas potentially in its path
- 1.2 emphasise that all fires are different in ways that require an awareness of fire conditions, local circumstances and personal capacity
- 1.3 recognise that the heightened risk on the worst days demands a different response
- 1.4 retain those elements of the existing bushfire policy that have proved effective
- 1.5 strengthen the range of options available in the face of fire, including community refuges, bushfire shelters and evacuation
- 1.6 ensure that local solutions are tailored and known to communities through local bushfire planning
- 1.7 improve advice on the nature of fire and house defendability, taking account of broader landscape risks.

BUSHFIRE SAFETY POLICY

This section addresses the overarching recommendation for a revised bushfire safety policy and Recommendations 1.2 to 1.5.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

A number of changes were made to Victoria's bushfire safety policy following the release of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's Interim Report (the Commission) in August 2009. These changes included adopting the national "PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE." message, which emphasises:

- the importance of people assessing their property and circumstances, deciding whether to leave early or stay and defend a well prepared property and reflecting that decision in a written bushfire survival plan;
- not all homes can be defended in a bushfire and it is always safer to leave early than to stay and defend; and
- preservation of human life and safety should be the primary consideration in developing a bushfire survival plan.

together with a range of other measures outlined below.

The Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC) led the development of *Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework*, which is now the responsibility of the Fire Services Commissioner. The Framework was released on 16 December 2010 and is available on the Commissioner's website www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au.

The Framework is designed to improve bushfire safety for all Victorians. Its foremost priority is protecting human life and ensuring people's safety. The Framework aims to:

- develop a shared responsibility for bushfire safety between State and local government, fire services and emergency management agencies, communities, households and individuals (see also Chapter 9 below);
- improve the level of public awareness of bushfire risk and the ability of people to make informed decisions to protect their lives;
- support and improve local bushfire safety planning; and
- provide a range of options for individuals and communities to choose from depending on their personal circumstances and location that maximises their prospect of survival in a bushfire.

Not everything in the Framework is new – but it is the first time it has been brought together in one place to guide all people with a shared responsibility for bushfire safety to achieve consistency and continuity in bushfire safety planning. The Framework introduces the enhancements recommended by the Commission, including greater focus on community warnings and promotion of a broader range of bushfire safety options to assist people to make informed decisions about their safety.

The Framework includes guiding principles together with a broad strategic framework for:

- promoting community awareness, understanding and action (see further Recommendation 2 below);
- bushfire preparation and planning; and
- community information and warnings.

To assist people to develop practical and realistic options that are tailored to local needs, the Framework includes guidance and direction for the use and application of the following bushfire options:

- leaving options and relocation destinations;
- defending a well prepared home;
- contingency shelter options; and
- last minute survival options.

Work continues to further develop and refine some aspects of the Framework. For example, the Government has examined the South Australian 'bushfire safer precinct' concept and concluded that, while it was not directly transferable to the Victorian context, it is important to assist people to determine where to go if they plan to leave early. The Country Fire Authority (CFA), in consultation with other agencies including the Fire Services Commissioner and local government, has developed a methodology to identify 'leave early destinations' as the most suitable places to go to on days of high fire danger, taking into account both fire safety and amenity. The CFA will implement this methodology before the 2011-12 fire season, and communicate to the community how leave early destinations are determined and, where appropriate, specific destinations.

Evacuation and these expanded shelter options are dealt with in more detail in the response to Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 below.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Fire and emergency management agencies are responsible for developing guidelines and procedures to give effect to the Framework and implementing its various elements. The Fire Services Commissioner will oversee the implementation of the Framework and will conduct a review and evaluation after each fire season.

The Fire Services Commissioner has commenced the first review, which will focus on consolidating and refining the Framework and developing an evaluation strategy. It will document implementation progress, consider any new developments and determine whether the Framework should be amended to address any identified gaps.

The review will draw on research and evaluations being undertaken by the fire and emergency management agencies on a wide range of issues related to community preparedness for, and response to, bushfire.

The Fire Ready Research and Evaluation Group, a multi-agency/department committee currently chaired by the CFA, oversees and co-ordinates information across government on fire related research projects currently being undertaken by agencies and departments and through the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC). The Group shares this information through a database of research projects, maintained by OESC.

One of the major research projects, led by OESC and funded in part by the Commonwealth, is exploring the experiences people have had preparing and defending their property during a threat of bushfire or direct impact of bushfire. This research is using data collected on bushfires over the past 10 years to investigate issues related to:

- the capacity and motivation of people to defend their properties;
- vulnerabilities;
- factors related to successful property defence by individuals and households;
- the relevance of community education aimed at preparing to stay and defend; and
- the defendability of properties.

The scoping of the project was completed in February 2011 and the fieldwork is now underway. It is anticipated that the research will be completed before the start of 2011-12 fire season.

CFA is researching community understanding of key messages related to the preparation and development of bushfire survival plans. The research will inform the development of new approaches and the refinement of existing programs and products to better address the needs of different groups in the community. This project is due for completion by September 2011.

The outcomes of this research, along with other research programs being overseen by the Fire Ready Research and Evaluation Group, will provide valuable evidence for the ongoing evolution of the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework, in addition to informing bushfire education and awareness campaigns.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND WARNINGS

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Community information and warnings play a crucial role in bushfire safety as emphasised in Chapter 4 of the Commission's Interim Report and Recommendation 1.1 in its Final Report. They are a key component of the guiding principles of the Bushfire Safety Framework.

Following the release of the Commission's Interim Report in August 2009, several significant steps were taken to upgrade and improve Victoria's bushfire warnings, intelligence gathering and analysis and alerting capability. These measures included:

- amending legislation to make the Fire Services Commissioner responsible for providing information to the community on, and issuing warnings about, bushfires. The Commissioner has delegated this duty to the Chief Officers of the CFA and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), and the Chief Fire Officer and Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), to ensure that they continue to issue information and warnings are issued in appropriate circumstances;
- amending the fire agencies' legislation to clarify their accountability for community warnings;
- adopting the national three tier bushfire advice and alert system for the 2009-10 fire season and refinements to the system following a national review for the 2010-11 fire season;
- using the new national Fire Danger Rating system and accompanying community messages for the 2009-10 fire season. As outlined below, this system was refined and improved for the 2010-11 fire season;
- developing the One Source-One Message (OSOM) software tool to enable Incident Control Centres and the State Control Centre to send warnings simultaneously to a variety of outlets - the media, fire agency websites and Victorian Bushfire Information Line operators. Continuous improvement of OSOM will see additional technologies supported as determined by community needs;
- establishing an Alerts and Warnings Information Steering Committee, chaired by the CFA and comprising representatives from DSE, OESC, MFB and Victoria State Emergency Services (VICSES). This Committee oversees the policy and system development for warnings to the community particularly in regards to the development and application of the OSOM tool and on the format and content of the CFA and DSE websites' Incident Summary Page;
- developing guidelines to assist communities and local CFA brigades to develop arrangements for the use of existing brigade sirens (or community sponsored and run sirens) as a mechanism to alert the community to bushfire threat;
- leading the national development of national emergency warning system, Emergency Alert, which enables warnings to be sent to fixed line phones and mobile phones by service address in a selected geographic area. Since Emergency Alert became operational on 1 December 2009, it has been used 284 times and issued in excess of 6.8 million messages. The system has been used in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory for flood, tsunami, bushfire, storm surge, chemical incident and missing person emergencies;
- continuing to develop Emergency Alert by completing a feasibility study on behalf of all Australian Governments which confirmed that a location based mobile telephone warning capability was technically feasible. Phase 2 of Emergency Alert has commenced and is detailed below;
- developing the use of new social media technology (including customised Facebook, free official iPhone applications and other smartphone platforms including Blackberry and Android) to assist community members, particularly young people, to gauge their level of fire readiness and to communicate important information on fire danger ratings and warnings on going fires. CFA has developed a specific low bandwidth version of its website for alerts and warning usage (www.cfa.vic.gov.au/mobile). This is designed for mobile phone devices with an internet browser and dial-up internet users.
- significantly expanding the range of official emergency broadcasters in Victoria by entering into a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ABC, Sky-News TV and a MOU with all commercial radio broadcasters. UGFM-Radio Murrindindi became Australia's first community broadcaster to have official status as an emergency broadcaster, and MOUs have now been signed with four other community broadcasters;

- providing other community radio broadcasters with advice on how they can access the OSOM feed to broadcast emergency information and warnings; and
- a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed has been made available on CFA and DSE's websites for incident summaries and warnings and advice.

Further enhancements made to the community information and warnings systems for the 2010-11 fire season included:

Improvements to the Fire Danger Ratings system - Victoria participated strongly in the national review of the Fire Danger Rating system following the 2009-10 fire season. This review resulted in some significant improvements to the application of the system in Victoria including:

- determining which of the Forest or Grass Fire Danger Indices is the appropriate primary guide for the Fire Danger Rating in individual weather districts;
- adjusting the triggers on the Grass Fire Danger Index for Extreme and Code Red fire danger forecasts to 100 and 150 respectively to better reflect the risk level; and
- clarifying the messages and call to action associated with the various Fire Danger Ratings so they are easier for the community to understand and take appropriate action.

In addition, Victoria determined:

- the highest Fire Danger Rating level should be referred to simply as "Code Red";
- the primary Fire Danger Index for the Mallee, Wimmera and Northern Country weather districts should be the Grass Fire Danger Index; and
- the State Fire Controller (the Fire Services Commissioner or his delegate) should have some discretion based on various factors in addition to the relevant Fire Danger Index in determining whether a Code Red rating is appropriate.

The Fire Services Commissioner and the fire services entered into a MOU with the Bureau of Meteorology on 7 December 2010 for the provision of Fire Danger Rating forecasts for Victoria for the 2010-11 fire season.

In the lead-up to the 2009-10 fire season, as a result of the introduction of the new system of Fire Danger Ratings, existing roadside signage was covered with temporary signage highlighting the changes to the system and directing the public to additional sources of information. The OESC then undertook research into the function and effectiveness of fire danger indicator signs on Victoria's roads. In response to the findings of this research and the national review of the Fire Danger Rating system, the OESC collaborated with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), CFA, Fire Services Commissioner, VicRoads and local councils to design, manufacture and install new arch-shaped signs showing the revised Fire Danger Ratings.

VicRoads and local councils have installed over 340 signs across 50 municipalities. The design, procurement and first run of installations of Fire Danger Rating signs is now complete. The CFA will liaise with the relevant road manager and MAV in relation to any requirement for future signs.

Parks Victoria also installed the revised Fire Danger Rating signage at the Wilsons Promontory and Port Campbell National Parks and the Cape Conran Coastal Park.

Local arrangements between councils and CFA brigades are in place to ensure that the new signs are monitored and updated during the fire season. The fire services ensure

that the signs are updated daily as required to reflect the day's Fire Danger Rating and Total Fire Ban advice. The Fire Services Commissioner, in conjunction with the CFA and DSE, will oversee Victoria's policy on communicating Fire Danger Rating, including through the signs, as part of his statutory responsibility to provide community information.

Alignment of Total Fire Ban and Weather District Boundaries - In addition, the CFA revised and aligned its Total Fire Ban district boundaries with the Bureau of Meteorology weather districts (used for Fire Danger Ratings), both of which are based on local government areas. These uniform boundaries assist in boosting fire safety by making it easier for Victorians to understand important fire information and warnings and how they should respond to them.

Strategic Control Priorities - The Fire Services Commissioner issued strategic control priorities to guide controllers at the state, regional and incident levels during the 2010-11 fire season. These priorities focus on the primacy of life and issuing community information and warnings that are timely, relevant and tailored to assist community members to make informed decisions about their safety.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Building on the measures already taken, the Government is determined to further strengthen the capacity to deliver timely, accurate and meaningful information and warnings to the community about bushfires.

Emergency Alert Phase 2 – Following the completion of the feasibility study, the Commonwealth announced in September 2010 that it would fund the establishment costs for the second phase of the Emergency Alert project, which will enable warnings to be sent to mobile phones based on their physical location at the time of the emergency. This capability is referred to as the Location Based Solution (LBS) and involves:

- the design of technical, legal and commercial requirements by Victoria in consultation with all jurisdictions,
- development and implementation of the LBS capability by the carriers; and
- the integration of the LBS capability into Emergency Alert.

The Commonwealth asked Victoria, through the OESC, to continue to lead the project on behalf of all States and Territories.

Victoria is currently evaluating the LBS proposals submitted by all three telecommunications carriers. Implementation is contingent on the proposals meeting national technical, commercial and legal requirements and the outcomes of subsequent negotiations. Significant work continues at State and Commonwealth levels to progress the LBS capability.

Mobile Phone Blackspots - The Victorian Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to address Mobile Phone Blackspots. A whole of Government submission has been made to the Senate Committee Inquiry into the capacity of communication networks and emergency warning systems to deal with emergencies and natural disasters.

The Fire Ready community information campaign highlights to the community the importance of seeking multiple sources of information on high bushfire risk days, whether through emergency broadcasters, the internet or the Victorian Bushfire Information Line.

One Source One Message - The CFA, in partnership with the DSE, has strengthened the infrastructure of, and redundancy arrangements for, the OSOM tool for the 2011-12 fire season. The next stages of the Advance Warning Systems project will extend the tool to cover all emergency hazards and all emergency services organisations, including the MFB and VICSES.

Further work will be undertaken to upgrade the useability of the Incident Summary pages on CFA and DSE websites. VICSES and MFB are also reviewing their websites to support the 'all hazards' use of OSOM into the future. The Advance Warning Systems project is scheduled for completion by June 2012.

Sirens –OESC has commenced a review of its guidelines (released in November 2009) for the use of community warning sirens in the context of siren trials at two locations. In October 2010, OESC issued a call for expressions of interest, for the design and building of trial community alerting siren systems. This was followed by a selective tender process, which closed in April 2011.

The OESC has been working closely with two communities – one in the Yarra Valley (Steels Creek) and a second in the Dandenong Ranges (Olinda) – with the aim of installing and testing sirens in suitable locations. Installation and testing of these systems is expected to be completed before the start of the 2011-12 bushfire season.

OESC has completed a 10-year evaluation of the state's first community alert warning siren system at Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges. This evaluation provides important long-term data about the impact and effectiveness of sirens as warnings in a high bushfire risk area.

The Ferny Creek evaluation and outcomes of the Steels Creek and Olinda trials, including research into residents' use of bushfire warnings, will inform the review of the guidelines. It is intended that the review will be completed concurrently with the two community warning siren trials, before the start of the 2011-12 bushfire season.

Official Emergency Broadcasters - OESC will continue discussions with commercial and community broadcasters with the aim of further increasing the number of Official Emergency Broadcasters available to broadcast emergency information and warnings.

Forecasting Potential Fire Risk - Australian Governments have agreed to conduct a research program to develop an improved basis for forecasting fire risk. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department is coordinating this research under the auspices of the National Emergency Management Committee. It will build on the fire severity research DSE led in response to the Commission's Interim Recommendation 4.3 and is expected to be completed by July 2013.

Review of Community Warnings - The Fire Services Commissioner is undertaking a review of policy, systems and procedures used by incident management teams for triggering, developing and issuing community warnings during a bushfire threat to ensure that they deliver timely, accurate, meaningful and action orientated warnings to communities. The review will be completed in June 2011 and the results incorporated into policy and procedures for the 2011-12 fire season.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS

The preamble to the Guiding Principles in the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework recognises:

Our diverse communities face different bushfire risks and each has particular needs. Bushfire planning must be locally based, consistent with statewide principles.

What the Government has done and plans to do in relation to Recommendation 1.6 is set out under Recommendation 3 below.

ADVICE ON THE NATURE OF FIRE AND HOUSE DEFENDABILITY

This section specifically addresses Recommendation 1.7.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Bushfire Safety Framework recognises that people will respond to the threat of bushfire in a range of ways. It includes the bushfire safety option of defending a well prepared home under some circumstances.

Following the release of the Commission's Interim Report, the CFA:

- created the Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool (available on the CFA website, as a CD-ROM and printed workbook) to assist residents in their bushfire survival planning;
- appointed 10 Bushfire Safety Officers to assist residents to use the Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool and to undertake individual property assessments; and
- established a program to support and advise private land owners, to assist in their understanding of fire risk, and steps to take in order to reduce bushfire risk around their property.

Before the 2010-11 fire season, the CFA:

- extended its Bushfire Safety Officer program by increasing the number of officers to 15 with the aim of providing site specific advice to approximately 2000 households by December 2011. CFA has carried out over 1,432 individual property inspections as at 5 May 2011. This program allows residents to better understand and manage their bushfire risk and develop appropriate bushfire survival plans; and
- reviewed and upgraded its on-line Household Bushfire Self-Assessment Tool.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Prior to the 2011-12 fire season, the CFA will further revise the Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool in line with updates to other programs and to further improve accessibility to a wider audience. The CFA has commissioned market research to assist with this exercise.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Interim Report Recommendation 4.3 (Fire Severity Scale) and 4.8 (Warnings).
Final Report Recommendations 2-5 (community education, local planning, shelter options and evacuation), 56 (planned burning) and 63 (Fire Services Commissioner Act).

RECOMMENDATION 2

The State revise the approach to community bushfire safety education in order to:

- 2.1 ensure that its publications and educational materials reflect the revised bushfire safety policy
- 2.2 equip all fire agency personnel with the information needed to effectively communicate the policy to the public as required
- 2.3 ensure that in content and delivery the program is flexible enough to engage individuals, households and communities and to accommodate their needs and circumstances
- 2.4 regularly evaluate the effectiveness of community education programs and amend them as necessary.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Significant aspects of the community education and engagement program for the 2009-10 fire season included:

- running a large Summer Fire Community Information Campaign. It involved direct mail, localised information events, and a major advertising campaign on television, online and radio and through outdoor advertising and the print media including:
 - o running the nation's first Fire Action Week in October 2009 to raise community awareness of bushfire safety;
 - o publishing Fire Action Week supplements in metropolitan and regional newspapers across Victoria on the critical need to prepare for the fire season;
 - o extensively revising publications and programs to better inform and educate the community in how to prepare for, and what to do in the event of, bushfires;
 - o distributing more than 265,000 Fire Ready kits to residents in high-risk bushfire areas and 83,000 kits were given to households in bushfire prone areas; and
 - o undertaking a Victoria-wide mail out to approximately 1.6 million households of an eight-page information brochure and wallet card with key emergency services telephone numbers and website addresses.
- identifying cultural and linguistically diverse spokespeople to assist in conveying bushfire safety messages to diverse communities;
- working with Vision Australia, SCOPE and Vicdeaf to develop Fire Ready Kit accessible to all Victorians;
- continuing to work with Tourism Victoria to provide training, tools and information for tourism operators and tourists regarding bushfire safety;
- increasing the number of Community Fire Guard meetings to 887 with 337 new groups formed; and
- increasing the number of community Fire Ready meetings to 2197.

Before the 2010-11 fire season, CFA reviewed and updated key publications, including:

- the Fire Ready Kit;
- other complementary fact sheets that are provided as part of education programs, such as Fire Ready Victoria meetings, pre-season and Community Fireguard meetings (includes "Horses and Bushfires", "Bushfire Alerts and Warnings", "Pets and Bushfires" and the "Bushfire Survival Guide"); and
- the script for Fire Ready Victoria

to ensure they reflected the new Bushfire Safety Policy Framework and revised key messages for the summer.

The 2010-11 season presented some challenges to community engagement and education activities, due to the unseasonably wet weather and low temperatures, which reduced community perception of bushfire risk and therefore people's motivation to seek bushfire information.

Despite these challenges, the CFA conducted over 1000 Fire Ready Victoria meetings as well as over 350 Community Fireguard maintenance meetings. During the fire season, 46 new Community Fireguard Groups were also formed around the state. More than 50 Bushfire Planning Workshops were also conducted. This new initiative aimed to assist individuals and smaller groups to prepare their own personal bushfire survival plans.

The CFA website remains the primary website for the community to access bushfire information. The CFA upgraded its website to improve user accessibility including releasing an enhanced Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool following a review after the 2009-10 fire season.

The CFA provided a Bushfire Safety pocket guide to all CFA staff and volunteers as a reference tool to ensure members were updated on the changes to bushfire safety policy and to assist them in communicating the policy to the community during the 2010-11 fire season.

The Fire Services Commissioner and Tourism Victoria convened tourism industry roundtables in December 2010 and April 2011 to develop a consistent approach to messaging and consider ways to better engage with tourism operators.

The Department of Justice (DoJ), through the Fire Communications Taskforce, developed and managed the 2010-11 Summer Fire Campaign in partnership with the Fire Services Commissioner and fire agencies, particularly the CFA. The Campaign had four phases:

Phase 1 – Fire Readiness and Planned Burning - Fire Action Week was held again across Victoria on 10-17 October 2010 to raise awareness of fire risks over the summer and encourage Victorians to prepare for the risk of bushfire through local community events and activities and a large media campaign. The week consisted of over 50 events including 20 planning days run by the CFA throughout Victoria's high risk bushfire areas.

Television, radio, press, direct mail, online and outdoor advertising on the following themes were run over the periods shown:

- **Launch/Fire Preparation: 10 October 2010 – December 2011**
To raise awareness of the fire season and the need to be prepared including clearing properties and making a fire plan. This included educating the community about the risks associated with different types of fires and weather conditions.
- **Holidaymakers: December 2010 – January 2011**
To educate people travelling through regional Victoria that they should be prepared for fire and check weather conditions prior to their travel. Messaging directed to holidaymakers was identified in early research as the best way of reaching the broader Victorian community around fire preparation. Campaign tracking research

indicated that holidaymakers messaging resonated with the people in high risk bushfire areas as well as the general Victorian community.

- Triggers to Leave - January – February 2011.
To educate people particularly in high risk bushfire areas that they should know their triggers to leave and ensure that they are incorporated in their fire plan.

Direct Mail was effectively used throughout the Campaign with:

- a Victoria-wide pack sent out in October 2010 to over 1.8 million households consisting of:
 - o a covering letter from then Premier;
 - o an eight page brochure on fire preparation and fire danger ratings featuring a wallet card with a holidaymaker checklist; and
 - o a poster featuring the new Total Fire Ban Districts;
- an Absentee Landlord pack sent out, in partnership with the MAV and 14 councils, to 36,000 absentee rate-payers with property in high risk bushfire areas comprised of:
 - o a covering letter from the Fire Services Commissioner encouraging people to prepare their property and do fire planning;
 - o a council insert covering fire information local to their area;
 - o a Fire Danger rating fridge magnet; and
 - o a Basic Fire Plan; and
- a 'Most at Risk' pack, developed with the CFA and 9 councils, and sent out to residents in High Risk Bushfire Areas containing:
 - o a covering letter from the Fire Services Commissioner encouraging people to be prepared for fire and do their fire plan;
 - o a Township Protection Plan relevant to their area;
 - o a Fire Danger Rating fridge magnet, and
 - o a basic fire plan.

A Fire Ready Roadshow was run over the 2010-11 summer. This local community safety and education initiative was designed to raise awareness of the need for everyone to have a bushfire plan. The Roadshow brought together experts from various government agencies responsible for fire safety and representatives from 26 councils. One of its main goals was to bring fire safety messaging to local communities in high risk areas to complement CFA education programs that require people to attend a meeting. The schedule was developed with a focus on the 52 most at risk areas in the State, and visited 40 towns across Victoria between 4 December and 13 February. Wherever possible the Roadshow visits were timed to coincide with an existing local event to maximise exposure and participation.

Planned burning communication activities were also part of the Summer Fire Information campaign. These advertisements were designed to publicise when and where burns were occurring and raising awareness in the community about the benefits of planned burning.

Phase 2 – Fire Operational - This phase was contingent on Code Red days being forecast and involved the development of four press and radio live read scripts for adaptation if required. These advertisements and scripts included:

- a "next few days" version;
- a "tomorrow" version (used in January 2010);
- a "today" version (used in January 2010); and
- a "Cancellation of Code Red Day" version.

Phase 3 – Fire Recovery - This phase was contingent on the impact of bushfires on communities and, if required, aims to assist affected people in making contact with the agencies that can assist them. The Strategic Communications Branch at DoJ worked with the Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2010 to develop Fire Recovery press and radio templates, which could be utilised in the event of a major fire in subsequent fire seasons.

Phase 4 – Planned Burning - This phase is aimed at raising awareness in the community on the benefits of the planned burning program and provides information on where and when burns will occur. “Planned Burning in Spring 2010” commenced in October 2010 as part of Phase 1 of the Summer Fire Information Campaign. The “Autumn Planned Burning” activities commenced in March 2011.

These campaigns were designed to reach a Victoria wide audience, including regional and urban interface/outer metropolitan communities.

The advertising campaign ran across a range of media including outdoor, radio, TV, online, signage at burn sights, Fire Ready advertorial columns, and sponsorship of programs such as a Planned Burning segment on the television show Coxy’s Big Break. Social and online media were also used including video pieces for DSE YouTube.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

CFA will continue to evaluate its community education and engagement products and services as part of its commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring its safety advice is as effective as possible.

The Strategic Communication Branch at DoJ has commissioned market research into the outcomes of the Summer Fire Information campaign. The evaluation will be completed by May 2011 and provide a valuable resource in designing future community information campaigns. Planning is currently underway for the 2011-12 summer fire campaign.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 1 (Bushfire Safety Policy) and 3-5 (local planning, shelter options and evacuation).

RECOMMENDATION 3

The State establish mechanisms for helping municipal councils to undertake local planning that tailors bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities. In doing this planning, councils should:

- 3.1 urgently develop for communities at risk of bushfire local plans that contain contingency options such as evacuation and shelter
- 3.2 document in municipal emergency management plans and other relevant plans facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated-for example, aged care facilities, hospitals, schools and child care centres
- 3.3 compile and maintain a list of vulnerable residents who need tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate
- 3.4 provide this list to local police and anyone else with pre-arranged responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

State agencies are undertaking a range of initiatives to enhance the support to local councils and communities to improve their planning and preparation for bushfires.

Victorian Fire Risk Register - As recognised by the Commission in its Interim Report (Recs 8.1 and 8.2), the Victorian Fire Risk Register assessment process is a critical aid in local fire management planning.

CFA has completed the initial assessment process in all municipalities and alpine resorts within the country area of Victoria and is progressively completing the outer Melbourne municipalities where there is a bushfire risk. The Victorian Fire Risk Register provides a consistent, uniform bushfire risk register that maps assets that are at risk from bushfire, complemented by the identification of the current mitigation activities in place for each asset. Agencies across Victoria have generally accepted the Register as the most comprehensive bushfire risk identification tool that can be used at a municipal level. The Register is now being used to inform Municipal Fire Management Planning/Plans and the development of Township Protection Plans. This outcome is consistent with the expectations set out in the Commission's reports.

Township Protection Plans - The CFA developed 68 Township Protection Plans in the 52 high risk bushfire areas of the State for the 2009-10 fire season. In contrast to previous Township Protection Plans, which were developed exclusively for operational purposes, these plans included a community information section.

For the 2010-11 fire season, CFA revised and enhanced the community information section of the Township Protection Plans to form Community Preparedness Guides. It developed individual Township Protection Plans with 57 Community Preparedness Guides (some Guides spanned multiple Township Protection Plans) for the 52 High Risk Bushfire Zones. Community Preparedness Guides were published on the CFA website and distributed through a mail out during the 2010-2011 Summer Fire Information campaign.

Throughout the fire season to April 2011, CFA developed and added to the CFA website 54 additional Community Preparedness Guides, bringing the total to 111.

Neighbourhood Safer Places - This initiative is addressed under Recommendation 4.

Local Government Resourcing - To assist with local planning, the Government has provided funding for local government to employ five staff members through the MAV and 25 staff members (together with related equipment and office requirements) for councils in high fire risk areas.

To ensure the funding is best matched to need across the state, the Fire Services Commissioner established a steering committee, with representatives of the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) and MAV, which developed the delivery model and administrative arrangements for this initiative and determined funding allocation for local councils.

The 25 positions were allocated to 34 councils in identified high-risk bushfire municipalities for an initial 12-month period. The MAV engaged a recruitment specialist to support councils with the recruitment process. The new positions will focus on the development of bushfire plans and initiatives, including the development of Township Protection Plans and establishment of Neighbourhood Safer Places. To ensure that funding continues to be best matched to need across the state, the Fire Services

Commissioner will conduct a review within the initial 12-month period to determine ongoing needs and workload to assist the steering committee to determine whether this period should be extended or positions reallocated to address unmet needs in other municipalities.

Municipal Emergency Management Plans - OESC, in conjunction with MAV, the fire agencies and other emergency services has reviewed and updated the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Arrangements – Guidelines for Committees (in Part 6 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*) to support municipal level, multi-agency planning. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services approved the revised guidelines, which were published on the OESC website, www.oesc.vic.gov.au, on 3 February 2011.

Vulnerable people – the Department of Health (DH) and DHS are leading the work to identify vulnerable individuals in communities. Victoria Police has updated the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* to include Evacuation guidelines, which encompass vulnerable people. Further information on the guidelines is included under Recommendation 5.

A number of factors can lead to an individual being defined as vulnerable for the purposes of identification of people who require tailored advice and possible evacuation. This includes living in a high bushfire risk area; being geographically and socially isolated; living alone; and/or being physically dependent or unable to make an independent decision due to cognitive or other impairment (including acquired brain injury). All of these factors have been taken into account when developing the approaches detailed below.

Providing tailored advice - The CFA and Red Cross jointly developed a Bushfire Leaving Early Plan, which includes advice for potentially vulnerable community members on identifying a relative, friend or neighbour who can provide assistance when relocation and/or evacuation is required. These plans are available on the Red Cross website, www.redcross.org.au/vic

Key messages for vulnerable people were incorporated into the 2010-2011 Summer Fire Information campaign. This included information about the 'Bushfire Leaving Early Plan', 'leaving early is the safest option', and the need for community members to consider other people in their townships who may need assistance as part of their plan to leave early. Messages were also disseminated through the Campaign's Fire Ready Roadshow, direct mail, radio, press advertisements and a WIN Television special program on fire planning. Further, an article was incorporated in *Nurture Magazine* and a *Herald Sun* Fire Ready insert was made available to the public from 17 October 2010.

As part of helping to provide tailored advice, the DH and DHS have:

- requested funded agencies to encourage vulnerable clients residing in high bushfire risk areas to develop a 'Leaving Early Plan' using existing social networks or other supports
- where clients are unable to complete a plan, either independently or through existing support channels, asked those agencies to assist clients in completing plans; and
- provided information to funded agencies on how to access the 'Bushfire Leaving Early Plan' and on training opportunities available through the Red Cross, designed to equip agency staff to assist clients to complete a plan.

To support this process, DH has funded Home and Community Care assessment agencies to assist vulnerable service users to complete Leaving Early Plans.

Compiling and maintaining registers of vulnerable people - DHS has been allocated \$250,000 to determine the most appropriate model and registration system to support vulnerable people in high bushfire risk areas.

DHS is taking a two stage approach to implementing this aspect of Recommendation 3.

In Stage 1, DHS has developed a 'Vulnerable Individuals in Bushfire Risk Areas' Policy. On 24 November 2011, in line with this policy, DHS wrote to:

- community based Health and Human Services agencies in high bushfire risk areas requesting the agencies to identify and maintain a list of vulnerable clients at risk in a bushfire and provide agency 24 hour contact details to the relevant local council; and
- local councils advising them of this request to funded agencies and also providing information on local DH and DHS facilities accommodating vulnerable people for inclusion in Municipal Emergency Management Plans.

On 9 December 2010, the Chief Commissioner of Police wrote to the same local councils reinforcing the need to ensure that Municipal Emergency Management Plans were reviewed and updated to include both the 24 hour contact details of funded agencies working with vulnerable individuals at the local level and facilities where vulnerable individuals are likely to be located. Inclusion of this information in the Municipal Plans makes it more readily available for use in developing pre-planned response strategies.

DHS' preliminary assessment of the success of this initiative has shown variable levels of uptake. This issue is being dealt with in Stage 2 of the project, which is outlined below.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework emphasises, as the Commission recognised, the critical importance of local planning for local needs. The Commission also expressed the view that:

- there needs to be a closer connection between existing planning requirements such as emergency management planning, fire management planning, fire prevention planning and township protection planning;
- Integrated Fire Management Planning is the preferred option to facilitate local planning; and
- locally relevant information, in a form that is easily understood, should be contained in a single local plan that is the primary source of information for the community on bushfire safety options.

The Government is committed to working closely with local councils to assist communities to plan and prepare for bushfires. It will continue to implement measures that enhance local planning in preparation for the 2011-12 bushfire season, but will also look at longer term measures to ensure that local planning continues to evolve in a manner that is consistent with the Commission's intent. The Government will also provide funding directly to communities to enable them to participate in local planning and find local solutions.

Review of Planning Arrangements - In 2011, the Fire Services Commissioner and DoJ will lead a review of emergency and fire management planning arrangements in Victoria

and make recommendations to the Government on strengthening their application, rationalising their requirements and overhauling the related audit arrangements to more of a quality assurance, rather than a compliance monitoring approach. The review will also analyse the broader fire planning environment including Township Protection Plans and will draw on several relevant reviews, detailed in the following sections, that are already underway or planned. The review will consider and make recommendations on what legislative changes may be required to deliver an improved approach to emergency management and fire management planning.

Integrated Fire Management Planning – The Government has provided \$5.5m to drive the development of municipal fire management plans for high bushfire risk municipalities. The Fire Services Commissioner will lead this work by:

- setting policy, performance measures and reporting requirements to ensure consistency in municipal fire management plans; and
- identifying priority municipalities for the completion of municipal fire management plans in a phased approach—the first phase will involve the completion of 33 plans by 31 October 2011 and all plans will be completed by 31 October 2012.

Township Protection Plans - Since their adaptation to include a community information element in 2009, Township Protection Plans have evolved to become a key source of information for the community and an important tool to emphasise the shared responsibilities and obligations between the community, the fire services and the municipalities. The Government is committed to the continuous improvement of Township Protection Plans. Based on the experience of implementing the plans over the past two years and the Commission's long term view of better connections between local planning mechanisms, the Township Protection Plan State Reference Group (led by CFA and the Fire Services Commissioner in collaboration with MAV, Victoria Police, DSE, DOJ and local government) is comprehensively reviewing the Township Protection Plan program focussing on improving the efficacy of the program through:

- increasing the level of community and local government engagement in the planning process for the Community Preparedness Guides;
- making the Community Preparedness Guides more action-oriented and tailored to local circumstances; and
- better aligning the development of Township Protection Plans with the Integrated Fire Management Planning structures, processes and community consultation mechanisms.

In the short term, this work will result in the following outcomes for the 2011-12 fire season:

- development of an enhanced action orientated Community Preparedness Guide template which describes local activities in the "Prepare, Act, Survive" phases;
- CFA with local government and partner agencies will develop, through community consultation, 29 new Township Protection Plans using the new template, bringing the total number of Township Protection Plans to 140 by October 2011;
- maintenance of the existing 111 Township Protection Plans in the current format for the 2011-12 fire season; and
- including in Community Preparedness Guides links to relevant websites for Municipal Fire Prevention Plans or Municipal Fire Management Plans.

In the longer term, the Township Protection Plan State Reference Group will continue to refine the Township Protection Plan program and develop options for its further evolution which will be fed into the broader review of planning arrangements outlined above.

Municipal Emergency Management Plans - The OESC will lead the next stage of the review of the Municipal Emergency Management Plans guidelines to examine:

- ways to encourage and support consistent planning that is seen as good practice;
- the role of planning aids such as templates and good practice models as additional information sources to assist in the planning process; and
- the roles of municipal councils and other agencies involved in the emergency management planning process at the municipal level with a view to ensuring that these roles are accurately represented and widely understood.

The next stage of the review process will commence in early 2011. Relevant findings will inform the broader review of planning arrangements outlined above. Municipal councils, emergency services and other key stakeholders will be kept informed of the progress of the review and invited to contribute to the review process.

Victorian Fire Risk Register – CFA has commenced a review of completed municipal risk registers and will conduct a rolling review process taking into account the changing circumstances in municipalities. This process will enhance business systems to ensure alignment to current and future fire management planning processes and tools and to improve stakeholder access to risk register information.

Fire Ready Communities - The Government has committed \$5m over the next 4 years to establish the Fire Ready Communities program.

This program will provide flexible funding to identified high bushfire risk communities to support innovative locally-identified and locally-managed projects to make those communities safer. A Steering Committee chaired by DPCD will determine the funding allocations and DPCD will administer the program.

The funding will enable communities to:

- think about the environment and understand risks;
- understand their own capacity to respond to, and recover from, bushfire and other emergency situations;
- understand risks and plan realistically for strengthening their response and recovery efforts in times of bushfire and other emergencies; and
- find local solutions.

The program aims to build resilience through engaging and cooperating with local communities in a way which acknowledges their local expertise as well as their existing strengths, networks and capabilities.

Local Planning Support - The Government has provided \$3.4m to increase the level of support the CFA provides to local agencies in the area of fire prevention planning. This project will include:

- revising the current guidance provided to councils (including building on the review of planning arrangements outlined above to develop clear relationships between Township Protection Plans, Municipal Emergency Management Plans, Municipal Fire Prevention Plans and Municipal Fire Management Plans) by March 2012. Local government will be able to utilise this guidance in planning for the 2012-13 bushfire season;

- supporting local councils to incorporate new programs and develop processes to respond to local conditions by August 2012;
- working with DPCD, MAV and councils to integrate the municipal fire prevention notice and planning permit condition enforcement regimes by September 2011 (Recommendation 52) ; and
- putting in place arrangements by June 2012 to implement the proposed amendment to the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to enable the Chief Officer to delegate his fall-back power to issue fire prevention notices when a municipal fire prevention officer refuses or fails to comply with a request to issue a notice (see Recommendation 54).

Compiling and maintaining registers of vulnerable people - The second stage of this project commenced in March 2011. The aim of the project is to develop a best practice model and registration system to support vulnerable people in high bushfire risk areas. It involves an assessment of the efficacy of the approach adopted by DH and DHS for the 2010-11 fire season, including impediments to the compilation of lists by funded agencies and the provision of 24 hour contact details to local government, as well as consultations with key stakeholders. On finalisation of the project, DHS will develop an implementation plan and commence implementation prior to the 2011-12 bushfire season to respond effectively to this aspect of Recommendation 3.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 1 and 2 (revised Bushfire Safety Policy and community education), 4 and 5 (bushfire shelter options and evacuation), 31 (hazard tree identification and notification in Municipal Emergency Management Plans), 39 (amend Victoria Planning Provisions), 52 (fire prevention notice regimes) and 54 (delegation of CFA Chief Officer's power to issue fire prevention notices).

RECOMMENDATION 4

The State introduce a comprehensive approach to shelter options that includes the following:

- 4.1 developing standards for community refuges as a matter of priority and replacing the 2005 Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice
- 4.2 designating community refuges - particularly in areas of very high risk - where other bushfire safety options are limited
- 4.3 working with municipal councils to ensure that appropriate criteria are used for bushfire shelters, so that people are not discouraged from using a bushfire shelter if there is no better option available
- 4.4 acknowledging personal shelters around their homes as a fallback option for individuals.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework described under Recommendation 1 includes a comprehensive range of shelter options, including contingency and last minute survival options:

- **Actively defending a well prepared house** surrounded by adequate defensible space may be a valid strategy for people who are physically and mentally capable and willing to accept significant risk to their life and health to protect their home.

However, this strategy requires significant preparation and planning and will not be effective for all people, all houses or under all fire conditions.

- **Private bushfire shelters**, commonly referred to as bunkers, are purpose built structures that may, as a last resort, provide shelter for occupants from the immediate life threatening effects of a bushfire. If an individual chooses to construct a private bushfire shelter, they must obtain a building permit and the shelter must comply with rigorous standards.
- **Community fire refuges** are structures that can provide short-term shelter from a fire front during a bushfire. Victoria currently only has one refuge - the Woods Point mining adit. Work is underway to develop a revised policy, performance requirements and construction standards for community refuges so that this contingency option can be more widely considered, where appropriate, in the future.
- **Neighbourhood Safer Places** are places, such as sports ovals or halls, that may, as a last resort, provide shelter for people from the immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire. As at 17 May 2011 there are 171 Neighbourhood Safer Places in Victoria and 37 of these are located within the 52 High Risk Bushfire Areas.

The *Emergency Services Legislation Amendment Act 2009* inserted the regime for establishing Neighbourhood Safer Places in the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* in December 2009.

Local councils and the CFA work collaboratively to identify and establish NSPs. Councils are responsible for identifying, designating and maintaining NSPs. Before a Council can designate a NSP, the CFA must have assessed the site as compliant with strict radiant heat guidelines. Councils are also required to assess NSPs on an annual basis (with the CFA's assistance) to ensure the site remains suitable as a NSP.

To support these arrangements:

- the CFA has built an online business system that records in a consistent manner activities on identifying, assessing and designating NSPs and ensures the locations of NSPs are made widely available to the community;
 - the MAV has developed guidelines and templates to assist councils with the NSP process, including a template NSP Plan, which sets out other factors a Council should take into account before designating a NSP such as ingress and egress to the site; and
 - the MAV has also negotiated protocols with DSE and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to allow councils to obtain consent to designate NSPs on public land. The MAV, DSE and DEECD intend to review these protocols during 2011.
-
- **Private places of shelter** - some people plan or decide to move to privately arranged places of shelter close to their homes (such as a neighbour's well prepared house, or a building on their own property) when threatened by bushfire or in anticipation of dangerous fire conditions.
 - **Last minute survival options** - the nearest place that provides a degree of safety, such as nearby structure, area of low vegetation, water body or vehicle— may be the only option if no other shelter options are viable or available and people are unable to escape the fire.

Improvements to bushfire safety in schools have also been made through:

- allocating \$41m in the 2010 Budget to increase bushfire resistance of school buildings in high risk areas; and
- reviewing 36 existing school refuges and completing remediation works at 25.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government has allocated \$13m to assist councils to establish further Neighbourhood Safer Places and develop standards to progress the development of other shelter options. The Government has also committed to developing standards for the community refuges and replacing the State's refuges policy as a matter of priority.

Neighbourhood Safer Places – The priority focus for capital grants is those of the 52 identified high risk areas where it has proved difficult to identify suitable sites for NSPs, such as the Dandenong, Macedon and Otway Ranges. The CFA led two taskforces to assess the options in these locations. The Fire Services Commissioner is responsible for implementing the outcomes of these taskforces' assessments and chairs a steering committee comprising MAV, CFA, DSE and DPCD, which will determine the allocation of grants.

The taskforces identified 27 sites that may be suitable for designation as a Neighbourhood Safer Place with appropriate works, such as improved access and egress, vegetation management to reduce radiant heat levels and renovations to existing buildings. In some cases, landowner consent is also required. The Fire Services Commissioner is working with the relevant councils to determine whether it is feasible to carry out the required works. Many of these difficult sites require extensive work that will take time, but for some sites this should be completed before the 2011–2012 fire season.

The taskforces also concluded that there were some locations where no potential Neighbourhood Safer Place sites could be established. The Fire Services Commissioner will work with the councils in these areas to determine what other bushfire safety measures may be possible.

Community Fire Refuges - Following the Commission's 2009 Interim Report, the OESC conducted a review of the 2005 fire refuge policy including issuing a discussion paper for public comment. The Fire Services Commissioner has assumed responsibility for replacement of the fire refuges policy as part of the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework.

However, a new policy cannot be finalised until there are direct construction standards for community fire refuges. There is no standard for buildings to be constructed for use as a community refuge. To address that gap, the Government has requested the Australian Building Codes Board develop a national performance standard for community fire refuges by May 2012. The Board have agreed to work with Victoria on the development of a national standard.

In the interim, DPCD and the Building Commission have been funded to develop performance requirements for community fire refuges that Victoria could adopt ahead of any national standards and to contribute to the development of national standards. The Board have advised that they will provide assistance to the Victorian Building Commission in its development of interim Performance Requirements for community bushfire refuges.

The Government plans to amend the Victorian Building Regulations 2006 by July 2011 to prescribe these performance requirements for use in Victoria and will release the revised fire refuge policy (including these performance requirements) at the same time.

The Building Regulations (and fire refuges policy) will be further amended once the national standards are completed.

Leave early destinations – such destinations are not strictly a Shelter Option, but rather places away from high bushfire risk areas that people can relocate to on days of bushfire threat. They are discussed under Recommendation 1.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Interim Report Recommendation 8.4 (Fire Refuges Policy).

Final Report Recommendations 1-3 (revised Bushfire Safety Policy, community education, local planning), 5 (evacuation), 44 (fire resistant landscape design), 48 (building codes and standards), 49 (bushfire construction provisions) and 51 (building retrofitting).

RECOMMENDATION 5

The State introduce a comprehensive approach to evacuation, so that this option is planned, considered and implemented when it is likely to offer a higher level of protection than other contingency options. The approach should:

- 5.1 encourage individuals - especially vulnerable people - to relocate early
- 5.2 include consideration of plans for assisted evacuation of vulnerable people
- 5.3 recommend 'emergency evacuation'.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The State's Bushfire Safety Policy Framework includes the following leaving options (and relocation destinations):

- **Leaving early** - before a fire starts, either early in the morning or the night before - is the safest option. On Code Red days, everyone should leave early as houses are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. The Government's community education and engagement programs emphasise the "leave early" option (and arrangements to enable it), particularly in relation to vulnerable residents.
- **Leaving immediately in response to a bushfire threat** may suit some people but is a more risky option. People who plan to use this option must be vigilant, seek out information, listen for fire warnings and be constantly alert to signs of fire. They also need to understand fire behaviour and local conditions and be physically and emotionally able to act quickly and decisively.
- **Destinations** - People who plan to leave high bushfire risk areas need to plan where they will go outside the fire affected or threatened area. This could be:
 - o visiting friends or family in low bushfire risk areas;

- o going to outer suburbs, rural settlements, regional urban areas or larger towns that have been assessed as providing a suitable level of safety and amenity (See Recommendation 1 above on Leave Early Destinations); or
- o attending emergency relief centres (where these have been established).
- **Evacuation** of people from potentially dangerous areas is an option that the Incident Controller of the bushfire response will consider in consultation with Victoria Police and, if necessary, recommend. It is not, however, a viable safety option in all places or circumstances and people with a pecuniary interest in a property cannot be compelled to evacuate.

Victoria Police, in consultation with other emergency agencies, has developed guidelines on evacuation. These guidelines were included in October 2010 updates to the State Emergency Response Plan (Appendix 9 of Part 8 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*) and address two generic forms of evacuation - pre-planned and immediate. The guidelines set out:

- the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the evacuation process;
- factors to consider in deciding to recommend evacuation of a community affected by an emergency;
- how a decision to recommend an evacuation will be communicated;
- management arrangements for both pre-planned and immediate evacuation;
- key considerations in the preparation and planning for an evacuation;
- additional pre-planning requirements to support vulnerable persons in the event of an evacuation; and
- guidance for engaging with and advising the community throughout the various stages of evacuation, from the decision to recommend an evacuation to the return of affected persons.

As set out under Recommendation 3, Victoria Police work with DHS and DH to ensure that vulnerable people are identified and appropriately supported under the new Bushfire Safety Policy Framework.

CFA and DSE issued a joint standard operating procedure, *JSOP 3.12 Evacuation During Bushfires*, on 13 December 2010. The JSOP is based on these guidelines and details the process for deciding to recommend evacuation and managing the consequences of that decision. It was distributed to senior incident management personnel and is available to both CFA and DSE personnel in the IMT toolbox. The fire services have also developed a Recommendation to Evacuate template for the OSOM system for the use of an Incident Management Team when a recommendation to evacuate has been made.

Victoria Police, the CFA and other emergency agencies conducted a full community test of the Evacuation Plan for Breamlea on 17 October 2010. During October and November 2010, eight Incident Management Team exercises were conducted in High Risk Bushfire Zones during which JSOP 3.12, the guidance prepared on evacuation, was applied.

Victoria Police identified a need for the training of Evacuation Managers. A training package was developed and in April 2011 fifteen police staff from across the state qualified as instructors in this course. These instructors will now provide state wide training to other Victoria Police staff to better prepare them for their role as Evacuation Managers.

Victoria Police identified caravan parks and their casual and permanent residents as high risk areas in emergencies, and designed an education program to mitigate this risk. In March 2011, Victoria Police and Mornington Peninsula Council conducted a workshop for sixty caravan park owners in the Southern Region to assist and guide them in the development of emergency management and evacuation plans for their venues. In May, a similar workshop was held in conjunction with Yarra Ranges Council for caravan park owners in the Eastern Regional.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Victoria Police has established an Evacuation Steering Group with representatives from DHS, MAV, CFA and DSE to:

- continue to review the current Guidelines in Appendix 9 of Part 8 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*;
- ensure these Guidelines are compatible with the arrangements for the identification and listing of vulnerable people living in the community or facilities in high risk bushfire areas (see Recommendation 3 above); and
- develop Guidelines on the preparation of vulnerable people for evacuation.

Once this review is completed, the Fire Services Commissioner, CFA and DSE will revise their Joint Standard Operating Procedure, *JSOP 3.12 Evacuation During Bushfire*, and the content of community warnings on evacuation before the 2011-12 fire season.

The Government has provided \$20,000 so the fire and emergency services and Victoria Police can conduct community fire drills in 2011 as a pilot in two high bushfire risk communities. These drills will test simulated responses to selected bushfire scenarios and enable individuals and households to test their survival plans. If the drills prove successful, the Government will look at extending the program to other bushfire-prone areas as a regular part of preparing for the bushfire season.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Interim Report Recommendation 6.1-6.4 (relocation)

Final Report Recommendations 1-4 (revised Bushfire Safety Policy, community education, local planning, shelter options).

RECOMMENDATION 6

Victoria lead an initiative of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs to ensure that the national curriculum incorporates the history of bushfire in Australia and that existing curriculum areas such as geography, science and environmental studies include elements of bushfire education.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In October 2010, the DEECD submitted an out-of-session paper titled Bushfire Education in the Australian Curriculum to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, recommending that the Ministerial Council support the Commission's Recommendation 6.

The former Victorian Minister for Education wrote to the Chair of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority on 17 September 2010:

- advising the Victorian Government has funded the development of appropriate bushfire education resources by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and that these resources are available to all states and territories; and
- requesting that the Commonwealth Authority consider including the study of natural disasters in the Australian curriculum, within the History, Geography And Science curricula.

In addition, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, through Emergency Management Australia, has offered to host a discussion between the Commonwealth Authority, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the DEECD to further explore possibilities for incorporating disaster education, including bushfires, in the History, Science and Geography curricula.

CFA has revised its program known as "Brigades in Schools" following the Commission's interim and final reports and in line with the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework. The program was re-named "Fire Safe Kids".

The Fire Safe Kids program is available to primary schools in the government, catholic and independent sectors in Victoria.

The program has strong links to the Victorian school curriculum and requires participation by CFA Brigade members, teachers, parents/guardians and students. Schools self-nominate to receive the program, which is widely promoted to primary schools across the State. CFA brigade personnel, trained in program content and presentation skills, deliver the program.

In September 2010, CFA initially trained 29 field based training staff in the new program, who in turn updated the skills of brigade based presenters. CFA disseminated further interim updated materials to the field for use in the delivery of the program throughout the 2010-11 fire season.

An update of the "Fire Safe Kids" kit was completed and disseminated from 31 January 2011 to CFA Regions, which in turn will allocate to brigade presenters upon completion of the transition training.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority will develop teaching and curriculum resources linking bushfire education to the current Victorian curriculum in science, geography, civics and citizenship by 30 June 2011. It is planned to distribute these resources on-line and in DVD format to all Victorian schools (government, Catholic and Independent) and make them available for distribution to other States and Territories. A major interactive computer simulation of bushfire behaviour will be available in the latter half of 2011.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority has established a Bushfire Education Project Management Committee, with representatives from the DEECD and CFA, to oversee the project and appointed a Project Manager.

A key stakeholder forum has been held to identify the key focus areas for the bushfire education project. These relate to the themes of Learning about bushfires, Learning to

prepare for bushfires, Learning to respond to bushfires and Learning to recover from bushfires.

In January 2011, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority launched a website providing links to existing bushfire education resources produced by the CFA, MFB, DSE, DEECD and Parks Victoria.

The CFA has been funded to provide two purpose built Mobile Education Units, for use in high bushfire risk areas in Victoria. The Mobile Education Units will be used to deliver a specialised experiential bushfire education program to primary and secondary students. This program will complement CFA's Fire Safe Kids Bushfire Education program. Subject to industry construction capacity, CFA will have the new Mobile Education Units in service by the 2011-12 fire season. CFA will commission building the mobile units and manage their deployment in consultation with DEECD and other partner agencies, including DSE, MFB and Parks Victoria.

Further resources will be developed to support the "Fire Safe Kids" program drawing on the best available expertise to provide bushfire education across all school sectors.

The CFA is undertaking a full presenter transition program, with a target of retraining of up to 800 brigade based presenters to deliver the "Fire Safe Kids" program. The transition program has commenced and is scheduled for completion by December 2011. To date, 150 staff and brigade personnel have undergone training and are available to deliver the program. The number of trained personnel is expected to increase significantly over coming months, subject to volunteer availability and consultation with affected parties.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commonwealth lead an initiative through the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, facilitated by Emergency Management Australia, to develop a national bushfire awareness campaign.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

The Government supports this recommendation, but notes that is directed to the Commonwealth.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The recommendations from the Commission's Final Report that relate to national responsibilities directed to the Commonwealth were discussed at the National Emergency Management Committee meeting on 5 August 2010. The Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and DOJ represent Victoria on the National Emergency Management Committee.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

As a member of the National Emergency Management Committee, Victoria will work with the Commonwealth to assist in delivering this recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO – EMERGENCY AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures to require the following

- 8.1 that at locations that attract preparedness levels A or B there be a full Incident Management Team under the leadership of an accredited level 3 Incident Controller in position by 10.00 am on days of Code Red fire danger and a core Incident Management Team (eight personnel) under the leadership of an accredited level 3 Incident Controller in position by 10.00 am on days of extreme fire danger
- 8.2 that a full level 3 IMT be led by a level 3 Incident Controller unless the State Controller determines otherwise.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Facilities - In 2009, CFA and DSE were allocated \$28m to upgrade 43 Level 3 Incident Control Centres and 155 Divisional Command Points across Victoria to agreed minimum standards set by both agencies' Chief Officers. All 43 Level 3 Centres and 146 Divisional Command Points have been upgraded to date. Improvement works at the remaining nine sites are expected to be completed by June 2011.

CFA has the capacity to deploy up to 10 Mobile Divisional Command "Caches". These "Caches" provide the capacity to set up a Divisional Command facility at CFA brigades or other appropriate facilities anywhere in the State from the CFA State Logistics Centre within 24 hours. Further, CFA has the ability to operate pre-existing Divisional Command facilities which will remain in place to maintain incident response capability.

In preparing for the 2010-11 fire season, the CFA and DSE Chief Officers reviewed the requirements for capability and coverage of Level 3 Incident Control Centres. These Level 3 Incident Control Centres were also independently audited to ensure they were ready for operational use.

Following that review, 40 locations were endorsed as Level 3 Incident Control Centres for the season (including the geographic area each Centre covered). The Chief Officers also determined:

- the Benalla facility would be used as the Hume Regional Control Centre;
- due to the coverage and capability of the Ballarat and Bendigo Level 3 Incident Control Centres, Maryborough should be designated as a Divisional Command Point; and
- following the commissioning of the new building at Heywood, and issues with the full use of a shared building with Forestry SA and the South Australian SES and Country Fire Service, the Mount Gambier facility should be used as a Divisional Command Point.

Strategic IMT Deployment - For the 2009-10 fire season, CFA and DSE put in place arrangements for the pre-deployment of Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in strategic locations for days forecast to have a dangerous fire risk. These arrangements were tested on 11 and 12 January 2010 when a number of weather districts were forecast to have a Code Red fire danger rating.

The fire agencies reviewed and refined these arrangements in light of those experiences. The DSE and CFA's revised Joint Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J2.03 Incident Management Teams – Preparedness Arrangements* provided for the following arrangements for Code Red fire danger days:

- up to 12 fully staffed primary IMTs positioned at Incident Control Centres across the State by 10:00am;
- each Region with a Code Red forecast will have at least one pre-formed IMT by 10:00am;
- 2 fully staffed and centrally located IMTs that can be flown to any facility in the State;
- these 14 IMTs will be led by a Level 3 Incident Controller; and
- up to 20 secondary IMTs with a staff of 8 and 8 tertiary IMTs with a staff of 4. Staffing at these Incident Control Centres can be supplemented by the two mobile IMTs or relocating one of the pre-positioned IMTs.

The agreed arrangements for Extreme fire danger days are:

- a Core IMT of 8 staff will be pre-positioned at up to 32 Incident Control Centres;
- one fully staffed and centrally located IMT that can be flown to any facility in the State; and
- the State Controller may require full IMTs to be in place or on standby able to respond within one hour at predetermined Incident Control Centres depending on the fire danger rating.

Incident Controllers and other senior agency personnel received pre-season briefings in the revised arrangements, which substantially exceed the IMT pre-deployment arrangements of any other fire-prone region in the world.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Scheduled infrastructure works, for both CFA and DSE, over coming years will see further construction and/or renovation of some work centres that host Level 3 Incident Control Centres. Where appropriate, these works will incorporate purpose built features to meet or exceed the agreed standards.

The Government has approved \$17.8 m for the development of new CFA Emergency Management Facilities at Seymour and the Southern Metropolitan Region, which will include Level 3 Incident Control Centres.

The Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire services, these preparedness arrangements as part of his role after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Country Fire Authority and Department of Sustainability and Environment prescribe and audit the minimum number and nature of level 3 joint training exercises in which incident management team staff (including volunteers) are required to participate.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The CFA and DSE conducted eight joint IMT exercises focusing on practising standard operating procedures, one in each of the Victorian Government Regions, in November and December 2010. To ensure an integrated approach and improve the capacity of the fire services to work together in responding to major fires and expand the Level 3 IMT staffing pool, the MFB was involved in those regions where it has a responsibility.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Lessons learnt from these joint exercises (together with joint operational experiences during the season) will be incorporated into the review the Fire Services Commissioner is leading after the 2010-11 fire season.

The fire agencies and the Fire Services Commissioner have agreed, through the State Multi-agency Emergency Management Training and Exercise Strategy Committee, to conduct eight exercises, one in each of the Victorian regions, in preparation for the 2011-12 fire season. These exercises will include volunteer participation and involve other agencies, local government and the community. These exercises will address the minimum number and nature of Level 3 Incident and Emergency Management Team exercises.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The State clarify whether, during major fires, Victoria Police should discharge its coordination functions from the State Emergency Response Coordination Centre or from the State Control Centre.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Chief Commissioner of Police has reviewed Victoria Police's emergency response coordination arrangements and determined Victoria Police, in the event of a major fire, will:

- discharge its statewide emergency response coordination function from the State Control Centre; and
- operate its central coordination support function from the State Emergency Support Centre.

Victoria Police has invested \$1.8m to improve the operational and coordination capacity and capability at the Victoria Police Centre to fulfil its emergency management responsibilities. The introduction and refinement of the Incident Command and Control System and the Police Emergency Event Command (IT) system will further improve this capability.

Since 2010, Victoria Police members across the state have undertaken revised emergency management training to enhance their capacity and capability including:

- Level 2 Incident Command and Control System training sessions delivered to all members at or above the rank of Inspector;

- Incident Command and Control System training to over 8000 operational police members as part of the 2010 Operational Tactics and Safety Training package;
- an increased formal focus on Critical Incident and Emergency Management Training in foundation and all promotional courses, together with targeted packages delivered at Field Investigators Course and Crime Courses;
- 100 Victoria Police public service staff received an overview of State Police Operations Centre and Police Emergency Event Command; and
- regional, divisional and local level training targeting all levels of staff in Incident Command and Control System, Police Emergency Event Command and Emergency Management duties.

Victoria Police's commitment to enhanced emergency management training is ongoing.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The State consider amending the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* in order to achieve the following:

- 11.1 remove the title of Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services
- 11.2 clarify the function and powers of the Minister
- 11.3 designate the Chief Commissioner of Police as Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management, who would have primary responsibility for keeping the Minister informed during an emergency.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In response to the Commission's Interim Report, the Chief Commissioner of Police conducted a review that led to the overhauled Victoria's emergency management Command, Control and Coordination arrangements.

Both the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* were amended to facilitate these new management arrangements (with the fire services revising their agreements and joint operating procedures to embed those changes).

Victoria Police revised the State Emergency Response Plan before the 2010-11 bushfire season in response to Recommendation 11.3. The Plan now reflects the Chief Commissioner's responsibility (as the State Emergency Response Coordinator) for keeping the Minister for Police and Emergency Services informed during a major statewide emergency.

The OESC has published these revised arrangements in Part 3 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* on its website, www.oesc.vic.gov.au.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government has directed DoJ to develop legislation to amend the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to address this recommendation for introduction to Parliament in 2011.

Once these amendments are enacted, the OESC will revise the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* so it accords with the legislation and publish the changes on its website.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The State consider either amending the *Emergency Management Act 1986* or adopting a standing practice to require the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or the Chief Commissioner of Police to consult the Premier about the possibility of declaring a state of disaster for all of or any part of Victoria whenever the Minister or the Chief Commissioner of Police becomes aware of circumstances that make it a reasonable possibility that the criteria for making such a declaration will be satisfied.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The State consider amending the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations short of a state of disaster.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Victoria Police amended the State Emergency Response Plan in October 2010 so that the Chief Commissioner of Police can:

- declare an emergency of State significance in acknowledgment that a major emergency is underway; and
- inform the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Premier of such a declaration.

If the Minister for Police and Emergency Services forms the opinion that it may be necessary to exercise the powers that flow from a declaration of a State of Disaster, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services will as soon as practicable inform the Premier of this opinion so the Premier can decide whether to make such a declaration.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government has directed DoJ to review the State of Disaster provisions in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to:

- introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations; and
- determine whether any other improvements to current arrangements are necessary.

This review will include consideration of amendments to the *Information Privacy Act 2000* along the lines of the Commonwealth's *Privacy Act 1988* to remove any impediments to the legitimate use of personal information to assist in facilitating recovery efforts after a major emergency.

The Government plans to introduce the necessary amending legislation to Parliament in 2012.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Victorian fire agencies amend the AIIMS framework before the 2010-11 fire season in order to do the following:

- 14.1 designate the Information Unit as a separate section reporting directly to the Incident Controller and require that the Information Unit contain a dedicated Public Information Officer whenever a full incident management team is required
- 14.2 specify a set of functions in relation to which the Deputy Incident Controller for a level 3 incident will have oversight, which may be adjustable for a particular incident by agreement between the Incident Controller and the Deputy Incident Controller
- 14.3 ensure that an individual with local knowledge is incorporated in an incident management team.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Fire Services Commissioner, in collaboration with the fire services, led a process to modify the application of the Australasian Inter-Agency Incident Management System (AIIMS) framework in Victoria to reflect this recommendation.

The resulting changes to the application of the AIIMS framework in Victoria were incorporated through amendments to joint CFA and DSE standard operating procedures *JSOP J3.08 Appointment of Incident Controllers*, *J4.01 Incident Information and Warnings* and *J2.04 Local Knowledge* on 13 December 2010. *JSOP J3.08* specifies the Deputy Incident Controller's functions in a Level 3 incident.

The Information Section, which includes the Public Information, Media Management and Community Liaison Units, now reports directly to the Incident Controller following these changes to the AIIMS framework in Victoria. Related updates were also made to the *DSE Fire Management Manual 8.1: Fire Suppression* on 7 December 2010.

In addition, the joint CFA and DSE standard operating procedure *JSOP 2.03, IMT Preparedness Arrangements* has been amended to incorporate the inclusion of local knowledge to advise on local matters in Incident Management Teams. This JSOP was approved on 13 December 2010.

CFA and DSE joint 2010-11 pre-season briefings reflected these changes and their training programs have been modified to ensure this recommendation is delivered.

Victoria has advocated that the Victorian modifications to AIIMS implemented as a result of this recommendation should be adopted under the nationally agreed AIIMS framework. The fire agencies and the Fire Services Commissioner put forward this approach to a national review the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities' Council has commissioned. The national review is expected to be finalised by August 2011 and propose a refreshed AIIMS structure.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment:

- 15.1 amend their procedures to require that an incident action plan summary be completed within the first four hours of an incident being reported and be provided to the State Control Centre and, where established, to the relevant Area of Operations Control Centre
- 15.2 adopt DSE's incident action plan summary as the template to be used by all incident management teams and ensure that the template is included in the online IMT Tool Box
- 15.3 provide regular training to IMT staff, highlighting the importance of information and reinforcing the support available from specialists within the State Control Centre.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The fire service agencies, in collaboration with the Fire Services Commissioner, reviewed and revised the joint Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J3.03 Incident Action Planning*. The joint CFA and DSE incident management documentation system used during fire incidents, IMT Tool Box, was updated to include the Incident Action Plan. In addition, the summary template and the Incident Shift Plan, which is the operational component of the Incident Action Plan, is included in the IMT Tool Box. The Incident Action Plan is a plan used to combat a localised event, it establishes clear objectives and priorities to resolve an incident and is consistent with statewide fire suppression priorities.

The revised procedure was communicated to both DSE and CFA staff at 2010-11 pre-season briefings.

Information on the availability and function of the IMT Tool Box was also published in joint Pre-Season Updates and tested through IMT exercises to ensure staff were familiar with the tools and templates available to assist IMTs during incidents. In addition, the updates and exercises reinforced the support available to IMTs from the State Control Centre through the technical expertise and products provided by Fire Behaviour Analysts, Bureau of Meteorology Fire Weather Forecasters and mapping services. The fire agencies have also distributed directly to regional and level 3 incident controllers a number of documents reinforcing the support available from specialists in the State Control Centre.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Fire Services Commissioner will issue, before the 2011-12 fire season, a procedure requiring regional controllers to develop a regional strategic plan, and provide the first iteration plan to the State Controller, within four hours of a major fire commencing. These plans must address in broad terms how the likely regional consequences of the fire, such as disruption to transport or key services, will be managed, which necessitates the involvement of all stakeholders in the development of the plan.

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment improve mapping support in the following ways:

- 16.1 DSE providing mapping data free of charge to emergency response agencies
- 16.2 greatly increasing the CFA's 'write' access to FireMap for incident management team staff
- 16.3 establishing a joint DSE-CFA training program to ensure that mapping officers in level 2 and 3 incident management teams are fully trained in using FireMap, including in producing fire prediction maps
- 16.4 requiring before the 2010-11 fire season that FireMap be used for joint incidents.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE improved its FireMap system by upgrading its server capacity in December 2010 to increase user access and improve reliability. This enabled FireMap to support additional access requests from emergency management agencies. All Level 3 Incident Control Centres have access to FireMap and FireWeb. This work forms part of a broader fire information systems project in Recommendation 22.

58 CFA Level 3 mapping unit incident management staff have been trained and provided with access that will enable them to update bushfire mapping information in "real time" to FireMap. Throughout 2010-11, CFA fire mapping specialists and a number of Level 2 incident management personnel were trained in FireMap. This training will be ongoing.

A new fully automated system integrates the FireMap, Bureau of Meteorology gridded weather forecast and DSE geospatial information with the Phoenix RapidFire fire simulation system developed by the Bushfire CRC. It provides up to six hours warning of the direction, speed and intensity of a fire within minutes - instead of hours - of it being detected. The new system was trialled for 12 months before the 2010-11 fire season. Together with the Fire Behaviour Analyst program, it became a part of the tool kit in Victoria's fire fighting effort for the 2010-11 fire season. The Phoenix FireMap Simulation tool was successfully used during the 2010-11 fire season. Lessons learnt from this season will be used to further enhance this system as the fire services' commitment to continuous improvement.

DSE and CFA jointly developed the Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J3.13 Mapping Team*, which was approved on 13 December 2010.

DSE and CFA have developed a joint mapping officer training program and initial training sessions were conducted between October and December 2010. This training program is ongoing.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The National Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia Committee is developing national accreditation for Mapping Unit Team Members. Both DSE and CFA support such accreditation and are actively participating in the development of accreditation materials. This national project is expected to be completed by December 2012.

DTF and DSE have agreed a funding strategy for the provision of mapping information to emergency response agencies. From 1 July 2011, emergency service organisations will no longer be charged for mapping information.

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment establish before the 2010-11 fire season:

- 17.1 a uniform, objective and transparent process based on the current DSE approach for the accreditation of level 3 Incident Controllers
- 17.2 a performance review system for level 3 Incident Controllers
- 17.3 a traineeship program for progression from level 2 to level 3 incident management team positions.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE has a uniform, objective and transparent process for the accreditation of Level 3 Incident Controllers in place. CFA has commenced implementing a Level 3 Incident Controller accreditation process in accordance with the agreed outcomes of the joint DSE/CFA Level 3 Incident Controller pathways workshops and associated recommendations.

The CFA and DSE Chief Officers have signed an agreement that outlines the model and a common process to become a Level 3 Incident Controller. The CFA and DSE are conducting sessions with existing Level 3 Incident Controllers to outline the steps the Incident Controllers need to take to maintain their accreditation. CFA has also consulted Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria on the adoption and implementation of this accreditation process.

The DSE Level 2 to Level 3 Traineeship Program includes selection, work preference analysis, evidence collection (including on-the-job experience at fires, scenarios and incident leadership training) and assessment. Seven people have been accredited to date in 2011 following successful completion of the program. This has resulted in an increase of accredited Level 3 staff in Incident Controller, Operations Officer, Logistics Officer and Planning Officer roles. A further 51 participants, in a variety of roles including Incident Controller, Operations Officer, Planning Officer and Logistics Officer are currently undertaking the program. The DSE Level 2 to Level 3 Program will be on-going, with accreditation of participants occurring progressively.

CFA and DSE have developed a Level 3 Incident Controller web-based database. This database provides details of current Level 3 CFA and DSE Incident Controllers and Regional Controllers and the State Controller will use it to support the selection of appropriately accredited personnel for these roles in the 2011-12 fire season.

In May 2010, the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation delivered their Advanced Incident Leadership Program in Victoria to fourteen Victorian fire agency staff and six from other jurisdictions. DSE and Networked Emergency Organisation partner agency staff also attended other senior incident leadership training as part of the Level 2 to Level 3 Program including:

- Country Fire Service (South Australia) Level 3 Incident Control Course,

- Major Incident Management for Incident Controllers (developed by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, WA and hosted by the Victorian DHS) and
- the CFA Control Line 2010 Masterclass.

In January 2011, the Fire Services Commissioner issued an operating procedure, in accordance with s.21 of the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*, which requires the fire agencies to provide the Commissioner with a complete list of regional and level 3 Incident Controllers annually and an updated list if new controllers are appointed. The fire agencies complied with this requirement for the 2010-11 fire season.

CFA, DSE and MFB have formed the Bushfire Multi-Agency Capability Committee that meets formally once a month to ensure consistency of approach in relation to standards in processes and training.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

CFA has established a priority list of its current 98 endorsed Level 3 Incident Controllers to undertake the accreditation process during 2011 and has commenced briefing on the accreditation process, with 11 briefing sessions undertaken to date. After the briefing, each Level 3 Incident Controller commences the accreditation process with their resultant individual development plan. The time taken to complete this rigorous process is dependant on the individual needs of each Incident Controller. Of the currently endorsed CFA Incident Controllers, twenty-five have commenced the process, with ten nearing completion in August 2011.

Following the completion of the development and assessment process trial, the CFA plans to evaluate the program in consultation with DSE with a view to jointly integrate the same program.

CFA and DSE have commenced jointly delivering training for the development of Incident Controllers. The DSE program currently includes Operations, Planning and Logistics roles and over the next four years, CFA and DSE will work together to include these roles in a joint program, and will introduce training for the Information Officer role during this time.

DSE and CFA are reviewing potential leadership development courses that are suitable for Incident Controllers, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Information Officers on the Level 2 to Level 3 Program and selecting preferred courses that meet DSE and CFA development needs.

CFA and DSE are finalising an interim joint performance review system for Level 3 Incident Controllers. This performance review process will be tested during the 2011-12 fire season, reviewed and then fully implemented for following fire seasons. The opportunity to trial the performance review system was limited over the 2010-11 fire season as there was only one Level 3 bushfire.

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures to require that a suitably experienced, qualified and competent person be appointed as Incident Controller, regardless of the control agency for the fire.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

On 13 December 2010, the Fire Services Commissioner and the chief officers of the fire agencies issued a revised joint Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J3.08 Appointment of Incident Controllers*, which outlines the requirement to appoint a suitably experienced, qualified and competent person as Incident Controller.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 19

The Country Fire Authority provide to all CFA volunteers an identification card or similar to facilitate their passage through roadblocks established in accordance with the 2009 Guidelines for the Operation of Traffic Management Points during Wildfires.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Victoria Police, CFA, DSE and VicRoads jointly developed and promulgated the *2009 Guidelines for the Operation of Traffic Management Points During Wildfires*. These Guidelines ensure that residents are provided with greater access to fire affected areas, while recognising the need to restrict access to unsafe areas and to protect potential crime scenes. These Guidelines were updated and reissued for the 2010-11 fire season.

The CFA received \$690,000 to develop and implement the recommended identification system for volunteers to facilitate their passage through roadblocks during major incidents.

Following consultation with DSE, VicRoads and Victoria Police, CFA developed a windscreen sticker to provide identification for volunteers, along with a recording and tracking system for the 2010-11 fire season. The windscreen stickers have three categories:

- CFA TMP Access – CFA Volunteer private vehicle (for CFA volunteers);
- CFA TMP Access – Private Fire fighting Appliance/Machinery (for citizens who are not CFA volunteers, but provide private equipment to support CFA operations); and
- DSE TMP Access – Private Contractor Appliance/Machinery (for contractors who provide commercial equipment to support DSE fire suppression operations).

CFA also developed the *CFA Interim Guidelines for Traffic Management Point Access Stickers* to support implementation of the windscreen sticker system in the lead up to the 2010-11 fire season.

When issuing a CFA or DSE private appliance sticker, the registration number of the vehicle is written onto the sticker and recorded in the tracking system. All categories of sticker have an individual serial number and clearly marked as valid to 30 June 2011 only. It is envisaged that the proposed CFA Volunteer ID card will replace the need for vehicle stickers for CFA volunteers in the future.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The balance of this project involves:

- the CFA, in consultation with Victoria Police and VicRoads, designing and issuing identification cards in consultation with volunteers, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), CFA HQ units, regional and district staff and external partners. It is important that the design of the cards meets operational objectives and is readily recognised internally and externally;
- the replacement of the *CFA Interim Guidelines for Traffic Management Point Access Stickers* with a new set of CFA Guidelines on the issue and use of identification cards; and
- developing a system, either in-house or outsourced, to enable the issue of identification cards to new volunteers and the re-issue of broken and lost cards.

This project is planned for completion in November 2011.

CHAPTER THREE – FIREGROUND RESPONSE

RECOMMENDATION 20

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their policies on aerial preparedness and standby arrangements, their dispatch protocols and the management of aircraft in order to do the following:

- 20.1 require that at locations that attract the risk assessment or preparedness level A on code red days all personnel needed for air operations must be on standby by 10.00 am
- 20.2 establish a system that enables the dispatch of aircraft to fires in high-risk areas without requiring a request from an Incident Controller or the State Duty Officer.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE and CFA have completed the first stage of a review of operating procedures and standing orders for aircraft request and dispatch. This stage of the review has aligned aircraft request and dispatch with the 'line of control' for incident management with interim protocols in place for aircraft request and dispatch for the 2010-11 fire season.

These interim protocols:

- are aligned with *JSOP 2.03 IMT Preparedness Arrangements* (see Recommendation 8 above);
- ensure that pre-positioned aircraft, together with other air support, are appropriately prepared and available for early rapid deployment on code red days; and
- take into account factors such as weather conditions and operational requirements for specialist equipment.

An additional Erickson Aircrane and three fixed-wing aircraft were available during the 2010-11 fire season. These additional aircraft brought Victoria's aerial fire fighting arsenal to 47 with a further 170 aircraft which could be called on if required.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Stage Two of this review of operating procedures and standing orders for aircraft request and dispatch will be delivered by December 2011. This work will further align the joint operating procedures for aircraft request and dispatch and the incident management preparedness standard operating procedures on days forecast to have a dangerous fire risk during the 2011-12 fire season.

The joint DSE and CFA State Aircraft Unit received funding of \$3.25m over four years to investigate, trial and adopt suitable technological improvements to improve information flow during aircraft request and dispatch. Project scoping is underway, including an analysis of dispatch systems around the world to determine best practice. Guided by this assessment, the project will develop a system that will enhance the current dispatch arrangements by reducing the number of steps and time taken to request and dispatch aerial fire fighting resources while maintaining appropriate checks and balances to ensure safe, effective and efficient operations.

Following the trial and evaluation of the DC10 Very Large Air Tanker during the 2009-10 fire season, a number of operational limitations were identified that affected the suitability of that aircraft in Victorian conditions, particularly for use around the urban interface.

In the 2010-11 fire season, two medium sized fire bombing planes (Convair 580) were trialled. The evaluation of this trial will be completed by June 2011.

The joint DSE and CFA State Aircraft Unit has trialled options for a high tech intelligence platform, an off the shelf 'eye in the sky', to transmit fire data back to Incident Control Centres, providing faster and better real-time information on a fire's progress. The evaluation report of this trial will be completed in June 2011.

Up to \$100,000 was committed to continuing the development of night vision goggle operations over the 2010-11 fire season. The trial will provide firefighters with the opportunity to use aerial ignition strategies and expand night-time planned burning activities. The State Aircraft Unit is working closely with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority to seek regulatory approval for the trial of night vision goggles during aerial incendiary operations in Victoria. The trial will be completed by June 2011.

Two new forward looking infrared cameras that can be attached to any of the available helicopters will replace outdated equipment and allow pinpoint hotspot mapping. A public tender to purchase the equipment has commenced. Installation and operational testing of the new equipment will ensure these cameras are available for use in the 2011-12 fire season.

The strategic importance of having an ongoing infrastructure development program in regional Victoria has been recognised through improvements to airbase infrastructure. In the Latrobe Valley, \$250,000 additional funding will see the construction of new permanent facility for pilots and ground support crews including a new briefing and rest area, new toilets and shower amenities. During bushfires, this additional space will also allow aircraft from other parts of the State to be mobilised and deployed to and from the Latrobe airbase. Similar strategies across the State will enhance bushfire preparedness particularly for the use of aircraft in the initial attack which is proven to reduce the cost of bushfire damage to the community.

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 21

The State, in conjunction with Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Defence, develop an agreement that allows Commonwealth aerial resources that are suitable for fire fighting and support activities to be incorporated in preparedness plans and used on days of high fire risk.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Commonwealth conducted an operational briefing before the 2010-11 fire season, as it did in 2009, to inform Victorian officials of the Commonwealth support, including air resources, available for the fire season.

DPC has led negotiations with the Commonwealth on behalf of Victoria in relation to the implementation of this recommendation.

Following initial discussions, the Commonwealth has agreed to review the Commonwealth Disaster Response Plan to assess means by which Commonwealth resources can be placed at higher states of readiness to support States and Territories.

The fire agencies, through the Fire Services Commissioner, have also strengthened links with the Commonwealth Government through:

- the appointment of a liaison officer from Emergency Management Australia to act as the conduit between the two jurisdictions and including this officer in planning considerations on days forecast to have a dangerous fire risk;
- establishing strong links with the Chief of the Defence Force and seeking further clarity around the accessing Defence assets through the longstanding, formal Defence Assistance to Civil Community arrangements; and
- including Defence personnel in State Emergency Management Team preparedness and response deliberations.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management resolved at its meeting on 11 February 2011 to task the National Emergency Management Committee to review and report on the effectiveness of arrangements between all Australian jurisdictions for communication, situational awareness, liaison and response to natural disasters. This work will consider the adequacy and effectiveness of extant support by Commonwealth agencies, particularly the Australian Defence Force. Victorian representatives on the Committee have specifically championed the pre-positioning of resources in anticipation of need. As part of the NEMC review, the Commonwealth has indicated to Victoria that the Department of Defence and EMA are consulting with States and Territories on how to implement this recommendation prior to the 2011-12 bushfire season.

Some pre-positioning of Commonwealth resources occurred during the recent flood events that affected large parts of Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment standardise their operating systems and information and communications technologies with the aim of achieving greater efficiency and interoperability between agencies.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Government has developed an *Emergency Services Communications Strategic Framework* (the Framework) to replace the *Statewide Integrated Public Safety Communications Strategy*.

Improved coordination of emergency services' communications was a key theme of the Commission's Final Report, and the Emergency Services Communications Strategic Framework will encourage close collaboration between agencies as they upgrade and integrate their communications equipment and capabilities. The Framework outlines a

strategy for emergency services communications, focusing on delivering the best possible communications technology and interoperability between agencies.

In response to the Commission's Final Report, the Government has allocated funding:

- to standardise the interconnections of radio networks between the CFA and DSE to deliver operational information to Incident Control Centres and Divisional Command Centres; and
- for a pilot program to enable tracking of CFA vehicles, including the development of the Masterplan by DoJ.

In December 2010, Emergency Services Policy and Support in DoJ, through the AVL Working Group, released a draft Code of Practice, which sets out standards and recommendations for the operation of Automatic Vehicle Location systems in emergency vehicles and Global Positioning System (GPS) enabled assets. The draft Code ensures that specifically defined spatial data collected, such as vehicle location, is available to agencies in a standardised format. Development of the Code is continuing with the focus now on the content and format for exchange of AVL data between central agency data-servers. The final Code of Practice is scheduled for release in late June 2011.

DSE vehicles will be equipped with GPS units by July 2012 as part of the DSE Radio Replacement Project. The recent upgrades to Level 3 Incident Control Centres and CFA Divisional Command Points will allow for GPS/AVL data from the devices to be received at Incident Control locations when a radio network path is available into the mapping tracking systems.

CFA vehicles will be equipped with a GPS capability as part of new radio terminals being deployed through the CFA Radio Replacement Program. CFA is currently investigating methods of getting the GPS/AVL information into the various Incident Control locations. The availability and provision of AVL information will ensure the location of resources is known, thereby increasing the safety of firefighters and improving the quality of decision-making in relation to resource deployment and incident behaviour.

DSE received \$21.5m over four years to:

- further improve the speed and capacity of the mapping system;
- increase the capacity of the software to allow greater access by partner agencies;
- provide for full backup of the system through new servers; and
- allow better tracking of fire fighting staff and vehicles.

As noted under Recommendation 16, this has enabled DSE to upgrade the capacity and capability of its fire information systems including FireWeb, FireMap and Incident Resources Information System and made them more widely available for use by other agencies, particularly CFA. The technology includes the Australian-first automated fire prediction tool that delivers specific and detailed information on the spread of fires to help protect the lives of Victorians in the event of a bushfire. Incident Management Teams will be able to access this technology to provide early warnings to the community through the OSOM tool.

The DSE ground (and aircraft) resources throughout the State can be tracked and managed through DSE's Incident Resources Information System, which is accessed through FireWeb.

WHAT OTHER RELATED MEASURES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED?

DSE/CFA Incident Channel and Level 3 ICC interconnections - Over the next four years (2012-16), DSE and CFA will interconnect their respective radio Incident Channels and Level 3 Incident Control Centres through a common infrastructure. This connection will allow GPS/AVL tracking data on the Command Channels to be delivered into FireWeb, which is available to all IMT personnel in both agencies. This functionality will be transferable from the current analogue modes into the digital radio systems.

DSE and CFA Incident Channel Network Upgrades - DSE and CFA continue to improve the reach and capabilities of their incident channel radio communications networks. In 2010, new remote radio sites were completed at Tutye, Mt McKay (Big Hill), Lake Mountain, Mt Big Ben, Austins Hill, Barrandudah, Kancoona, Anakie, Pretty Sally and Mt Ingoldsby. An additional site is under development at Currajong. During large multi-agency responses, CFA and DSE interoperate through both the DSE and CFA incident channel networks.

Victoria Police is committed to ensuring its members are provided with radio handsets compatible with the network for the area to which they are deployed. To that end, Victoria Police:

- trialled the use of dual band portable radios over the 2010-11 bushfire season to assist future procurement decision-making;
- will complete the evaluation of the trial and make recommendations to Victoria Police Command on the effectiveness of the dual band radios and recommendations as to whether purchase of further radios should take place by 30 June, 2011; and
- in parallel with this dual band radio trial, is reviewing its existing training in the use of Metropolitan Mobile Radio and State Mobile Radio radios. This review will also be completed by 30 June 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 16 (mapping support), 37 (develop bushfire risk planning and building framework), 39 (amend Victoria Planning Provisions), 56 and 57 (prescribed burning).

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Country Fire Authority review and improve its communications strategy as a matter of priority and develop a program for identifying and responding to black spots in radio coverage.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Government has already provided funding to improve the capacity of Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) and upgrade VICSES and CFA radio and pager networks.

In response to the Commission's Final Report, the CFA was provided an additional \$6.66m to identify and remediate radio black spots.

As part of its development of a comprehensive radio communications strategy, CFA is designing and implementing a cohesive, sector-wide process for the identification, resolution and on-going management of radio black spots. The resultant Communications Strategy was finalised by April 2011.

CFA has determined that different black spots remediation measures will be required dependent upon the nature of the black spot. Temporary black spots such as those caused by loss of radio tower will require a different remediation approach to a consistent black spot caused by terrain. The differentiation between the type of black spot will ensure the best investment in remediation measures and deliver the best possible outcome for Victorian emergency services and communities.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Under the Communications Strategy, CFA will develop a program of works to deliver the outcomes including black spot remediation. It will take a risk-based approach to determining the schedule for implementation of black spot remediation works.

Known, existing blackspots will be appropriately treated based on CFA's blackspot remediation process by December 2012. Beyond December 2012, blackspots will be continuously reviewed and addressed on a risk basis and remediated as part of an annual program of work.

WHAT OTHER RELATED MEASURES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED?

CFA has conducted a Radio Planners training course for its own and DSE personnel focussing on the correct use of radio equipment, protocols and processes.

CFA and DSE will ensure that radio discipline procedures are included as part of the annual pre-bushfire season briefings.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 22 (standardised operating and technical systems).

RECOMMENDATION 24

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures for investigating safety incidents and 'near-misses' to ensure that all dangerous incidents, including back-burns, are fully investigated and that all relevant people are consulted and informed of the results.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Both DSE and CFA updated and amended their procedures and processes for the 2010-11 fire season to ensure improved investigation and analysis of safety incidents including "near misses", back-burns and dangerous incidents. These improvements to safety investigation and analysis procedures are reflected in the fire services' revised Joint Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J8.01 OHS Incident Management*, which was approved and issued to personnel on 13 December 2010.

CFA also introduced the recognised Incident Cause Analysis Methodology (ICAM) process over 2010. ICAM is a process for investigating all incidents including "near

miss” and vehicle incidents and also underpins the conduct of Real Time Performance Monitoring for Incident Management Teams. CFA and MFB personnel have attended a number of courses to understand the ICAM process for investigation. Further courses will be delivered in 2011.

The “Human Factors” training course focuses on understanding of how human factors impact on the performance of people involved in decision making and is based on Bushfire CRC research. To date, 45 investigative and analytical staff from CFA and 18 personnel from other emergency services organisations, including DSE, MFB and SES and Ambulance Victoria, have been attended this course.

In October 2009, DSE developed and held an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Investigations training course which ran for four days. The course was developed to strengthen DSE's capacity to undertake timely and factual OH&S investigations. The course was attended by 40 DSE personnel, 3 CFA and 5 Networked Emergency Organisation staff.

In 2009 and 2010 respectively CFA and DSE implemented new OH&S Incident IT systems which support improved data quality and reporting capability for OH&S incidents within and between CFA and DSE, providing for streamlined investigation processes and increased investigation capacity. These compatible systems give personnel within Incident Control Centres the capability to record safety incidents and “near misses” at major incidents.

VicSES is also implementing this system and the MFB are investigating the potential use of the system. The advantages of multiple agencies using this system include:

- IMT personnel (e.g. Logistics/Medical Unit) being familiar with it and allowing greater flexibility to resource these roles from across agencies; and
- Capturing standardised information/data to report on.

DSE has enhanced its Employee Assistance Program to ensure continued support to employees involved in significant events. Enhancements include the increase in the number of on-site counsellor's visits across the State and increasing the number of staff trained in a peer support role.

The fire agencies and the Fire Services Commissioner also introduced a number of new measures for the 2010-11 fire season, including:

- piloting a position of OH&S Executive Advisor to the State Controller for Fire and Flood with the aim of establishing a standardised and consistent approach across all agencies when dealing with a multi-agency, high impact event. The development of this role is ongoing;
- including a standing OH&S agenda item in State Control Centre morning briefings on days of fire activity or when preparedness arrangements have been put in place to ensure that any “near misses” or events are appropriately dealt with; and
- including the primacy of life of emergency services personnel as a key priority in the Fire Services Commissioner's strategic control priorities.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Both CFA and DSE continue to review their processes and procedures to ensure that personnel involved in significant and dangerous events continue to be provided with appropriate support.

The Commonwealth and each State and Territory will be required to enact laws that reflect the model work health and safety laws by the end of December 2011. It is expected that all laws will commence on 1 January 2012. The fire services, in conjunction with the Fire Services Commissioner, are currently reviewing the proposed statutory requirements in relation to fire suppression activities.

As indicated under Recommendation 8, the Fire Services Commissioner will review, in collaboration with the fire service agencies, all such procedures as part of his role. A review of current joint operating procedures will commence after the 2010-11 fire season

RECOMMENDATION 25

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment require without exception that all relevant staff be trained in the need for Incident Controller approval to be obtained before a back-burn is lit.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The requirement for Incident Controller approval of any back-burn was reinforced before the 2010-11 fire season through:

- the DSE Updates for Level 3 Incident Controllers in September 2010;
- joint CFA and DSE Pre-Season Briefings (delivered to CFA and DSE IMT personnel);
- participant notes for Regional Briefings, including the guidance on back-burning being posted on both CFA and DSE's intranet sites;
- an article in DSE and CFA's Pre-Season Update magazine, which was sent to every CFA member and circulated regionally in DSE; and
- the DSE Chief Fire Officer issuing a Direction to all DSE staff involved in bushfire suppression emphasising this requirement in December 2010.

DSE undertook a review of the relevant policy in its *Fire Management Manual* 8.1: Fire Suppression in October 2010. The manual was amended to emphasise the requirement for Incident Controller's approval prior to conducting a back burn and provided additional guidance relating to ignition authorisation for the back burn.

RECOMMENDATION 26

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment adopt the title 'safety officer' (as opposed to 'safety adviser') and require without exception that a safety officer be appointed to every level 3 incident management team.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE and CFA revised their joint Standard Operating Procedure *JSOP J3.04 Safety Officer* to require all Level 3 IMTs to appoint a Safety Officer. Following approval of the JSOP on 13 December 2010, it was circulated to staff and made available on DSE and CFA intranet sites. Briefings on the changes were provided to DSE incident controllers and other senior regional and state personnel before the 2010-11 fire season.

The CFA and DSE updated other relevant documents, including policies, procedures, and training manuals, to reflect the change in title from “Safety Adviser” to “Safety Officer” including:

- the DSE *Fire Management Manual* 8.1: Fire Suppression;
- the CFA Chief Officers *SOP 11.07 Safety Officer/Field Safety Advisor – Role and Responsibilities*; and
- training materials for the joint Safety Officer training course.

WHAT OTHER RELATED SAFETY MEASURES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED?

The CFA is investing \$22.1m in a CFA crew protection program, centring on life-saving technology in fire trucks. After the design and procurement stages of the project, the fit out of at least 850 trucks will commence in mid-2011. This program will be completed by June 2013.

A further \$32m was allocated for personal protective equipment, including protective clothing. The CFA has already issued almost 13,000 protective suits for firefighters across Victoria with another 2,000 suits to be supplied by June 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 8 (Incident Management Teams).

CHAPTER FOUR - ELECTRICITY CAUSED FIRE

RECOMMENDATION 27

The State amend the Regulations under Victoria's *Electricity Safety Act 1998* and otherwise take such steps as may be required to give effect to the following:

- 27.1 the progressive replacement of all SWER (single-wire earth return) power lines in Victoria with aerial bundled cable, underground cabling or other technology that delivers greatly reduced bushfire risk. The replacement program should be completed in the areas of highest bushfire risk within 10 years and should continue in areas of lower bushfire risk as the lines reach the end of their engineering lives
- 27.2 the progressive replacement of all 22-kilovolt distribution feeders with aerial bundled cable, underground cabling or other technology that delivers greatly reduced bushfire risk as the feeders reach the end of their engineering lives. Priority should be given to distribution feeders in the areas of highest bushfire risk.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

At the Government's direction, Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) has established a Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce to investigate and advise the Government on the full range of options to reduce the risks of catastrophic bushfires from electricity infrastructure and quantify the benefits and costs, taking into account all measures taken by Government to reduce those risks.

The Taskforce is:

- investigating the technology and operational practices to reduce catastrophic bushfire risk with acceptable impact on cost, supply reliability, landowners and the environment;
- undertaking analysis and trials, seeking expert advice and consulting with the community; and
- required to:
 - recommend a plan to reduce bushfire risk within the 10 year timeframe recommended by the Commission that maximises value to the Victorian community; and
 - advise on options for fairly and efficiently recovering the costs of implementing the plan.

Options the Taskforce is examining include:

- targeted replacement of SWER and 22kV lines in highest bushfire risk areas with other network and alternative technologies that deliver reduced bushfire risk, including aerial bundled cable, underground cable and remote area power supplies (Recommendation 27);
- enhanced fault protection systems to minimise fire starts from fault currents (which is linked to Recommendation 32);
- faster identification and location of faults to enable more rapid fire fighting response;
- installation of backup power supplies to enable selective and occasional de-energisation of high risk powerlines on catastrophic fire risk days without compromising power supplies to affected users; and

- the potential for isolated households in selected areas to move to stand alone power supplies disconnected from the grid.

The Taskforce is providing monthly progress reports to the Ministers for Energy and Resources and Bushfire Response.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government extended the terms of reference of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce to ensure that better information could be provided to the Government to assist with implementing both the recommendations of the Commission and the Government's commitment to provide \$50m to begin crucial work to reduce the risk of bushfires being started by electricity assets.

The Final Report is now required to provide:

- a broad range of options to reduce the risks of bushfires associated with electricity assets including replacement of SWER and 22kV lines;
- an explanation of the objective of each option;
- a gradation of options with associated cost profiles reported on a Net Present Value basis;
- an explanation of the level of fire risk addressed by each option and the residual risk following implementation of the proposed options;
- an analysis of avoided costs of undergrounding power lines, with the avoided cost methodology including consideration of the net costs of undergrounding powerlines after removing the expenditure that would be incurred if existing overhead lines were replaced at the end of their engineering life; and
- options for the efficient and prudent allocation of the Government's \$50m Safer Electricity Assets commitment with the advice to include consideration of arrangements that applied to the Powerline Relocation Scheme and use of competitive tendering for the funds by the electricity distribution businesses.

The Taskforce's Final Report will be of critical assistance to the Government in determining its plan to respond to the Commission's recommendation for major changes to Victoria's electricity distribution infrastructure to reduce the risk of electricity assets causing bushfires.

The Report is now due to be submitted to the Government by 30 September 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

The Commission acknowledged that the major changes to the State's electricity distribution infrastructure it recommended would "take time to implement" and, as a consequence, also recommended a number of interim measures. These measures, and the Government's action in response to them, are set out in the following sections on Recommendations 28 to 31 (electricity asset inspection standards, electricity asset inspectors, hazard trees, identification and notification in Municipal Emergency Management Plans), 33 (spreaders and vibration dampers) and 34 (strengthen Energy Safe Victoria's capability).

The Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce has also conducted trials on automatic circuit reclosers suppression over the 2010-11 fire season. See Recommendation 32 (reclose functions).

RECOMMENDATION 28

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to change their asset inspection standards and procedures to require that all SWER lines and all 22-kilovolt feeders in areas of high bushfire risk are inspected at least every three years.

RECOMMENDATION 29

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to review and modify their current practices, standards and procedures for the training and auditing of asset inspectors to ensure that registered training organisations provide adequate theoretical and practical training for asset inspectors.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Victorian Parliament enacted the *Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment Act 2010*. Among other things, that legislation amended the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* to provide regulation-making powers for shorter asset inspection cycles and the training and auditing of asset inspectors.

Using those new regulation-making powers, the Governor in Council made the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Interim Regulations 2010. These regulations amended the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2003 to:

- mandate the requirement that distribution businesses implement plans to ensure electric lines (including SWER and 22KV feeders) in high risk bushfire areas are inspected at least every 37 months; and
- require that distribution businesses have plans to ensure that only staff who have completed a training course approved by ESV are assigned to carry out the inspections of those lines.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Interim Regulations 2010 were made under a Premier's exemption from the requirement to undertake a Regulatory Impact Statement and sunset in October 2011. ESV is currently preparing a Regulatory Impact Statement to support the making amendment regulations by October 2011.

Distribution businesses are required to submit 2011-12 Bushfire Mitigation plans by 30 June 2011. ESV will assess and undertake audits of these plans before the 2011-12 fire season.

RECOMMENDATION 30

The State amend the regulatory framework for electricity safety to require that distribution businesses adopt, as part of their management plans, measures to reduce the risks posed by hazard trees - that is, trees that are outside the clearance zone but that could come into contact with an electric power line having regard to foreseeable local conditions.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In June 2010, the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010 replaced the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2005. The new regulations require distribution businesses to include plans for managing hazard trees.

In July 2010, ESV requested distribution businesses to submit amended plans to comply with the new hazard tree requirements.

All distribution businesses have had amended Electric Line Clearance plans for 2010-11 approved by ESV.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Distribution businesses are required to submit a new Electric Line Clearance plan prior to 31 March each year.

RECOMMENDATION 31

Municipal councils include in their municipal fire prevention plans for areas of high bushfire risk provision for the identification of hazard trees and for notifying the responsible entities with a view to having the situation redressed.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

The Government notes that this recommendation is directed at municipal councils, but has taken action to facilitate its implementation.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Municipal councils are required under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to prepare municipal fire prevention plans.

The Victorian Parliament enacted the *Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment Act 2010*. Among other things, that legislation amended the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* to require municipal councils to include within their municipal fire prevention plans procedures for the identification and notification of hazard trees to the entities responsible for keeping an electric line clear of trees under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The MAV is developing guidance materials and templates to assist municipal councils to meet the new obligation to include hazard tree identification and reporting procedures in their municipal fire prevention plans.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is assisting the MAV with this work.

As part of the review of emergency and fire management planning set out under Recommendation 3, the Fire Services Commissioner and DoJ will examine and make recommendations to the Government on which legislation is most appropriate for the provisions on identification and notification of hazard trees.

RECOMMENDATION 32

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:

- 32.1 disable the reclose function on the automatic circuit reclosers on all SWER lines for the six weeks of greatest risk in every fire season
- 32.2 adjust the reclose function on the automatic circuit reclosers on all 22-kilovolt feeders on all total fire ban days to permit only one reclose attempt before lockout.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

As indicated under Recommendation 27 above, the Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce has undertaken trials of the suppression of automatic circuit reclosers² over the 2010-11 fire season. SWER trials started later than originally planned due to weather, including flooding in trial areas, but are now completed.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce will include its findings from the conduct of the trials and recommendations in its Final Report to Government, which is due to be finalised by 30 September 2011.

The Taskforce will take into account the views of the community in the trial areas in its Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 33

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:

- 33.1 fit spreaders to any lines with a history of clashing or the potential to do so
- 33.2 fit or retrofit all spans that are more than 300 metres long with vibration dampers as soon as is reasonably practicable.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

ESV issued formal directions on 4 January 2011 to the distribution businesses, under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*, to require them to implement a program to identify lines with a history of clashing and spans longer than 300 metres and then to fit spreaders and dampers as required.

The distribution businesses have submitted work programs to ESV setting out how they will become fully compliant with this requirement in high bushfire risk areas by 1 November 2015.

² Automatic circuit reclosers operate so that a transient fault on a powerline, such as contact by a small animal, causes a minimum disruption to the power supply. By contrast, a major fault, such as a falling tree bringing a powerline down, de-energises the line to reduce the likelihood of fire ignition.

Disabling an automatic circuit recloser means turning it off. Where a recloser is turned off, what would ordinarily be a transient fault may result in a loss of supply for a protracted period, particularly in remote areas, as the line must be manually inspected before supply can be reinstated.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

ESV will monitor the implementation progress reported by distribution businesses and include it in the annual pre-summer bushfire mitigation audits.

RECOMMENDATION 34

The State amend the regulatory framework for electricity safety to strengthen Energy Safe Victoria's mandate in relation to the prevention and mitigation of electricity-caused bushfires and to require it to fulfil that mandate.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Victorian Parliament enacted the *Energy and Resources Legislation Amendment Act 2010*. That legislation amended:

- the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* to enhance the mandate of ESV in relation to the prevention and mitigation of electricity-caused bushfires; and
- the *Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005* to improve ESV's corporate governance arrangements.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

ESV's resources are being increased and its staff will increase from approximately 90 to 110 by the end of 2011.

CHAPTER FIVE – DELIBERATELY LIT FIRES

RECOMMENDATION 35

Victoria Police continue to pursue a coordinated statewide approach to arson prevention and regularly review its approach to ensure that it contains the following elements:

- 35.1 high-level commitment from senior police
- 35.2 a research program aimed at refining arson prevention and detection strategies
- 35.3 centralised coordination that includes comprehensive training, periodic evaluation of arson prevention strategies and programs, and promotion of best-practice prevention approaches
- 35.4 a requirement that all fire-prone police service areas have arson prevention plans and programs, according to their level of risk.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In December 2010, Victoria Police published an internal Bushfire Arson and Prevention Strategy, which addresses this recommendation, comprising of the following five streams:

Developing a Better Understanding of Bushfire Arson - Victoria Police's Crime Department Strategy Group carried out an independent analysis on the effectiveness of police intelligence products used during the 2009-10 bushfire season, including 'Arson Person of Interest Profiles' and 'Bushfire Arson Hotspot Identification'.

Key outcomes from the analysis showed an increased knowledge and awareness of bushfire arson risk amongst police members and, to some extent, a reduction in suspicious vegetation fires across Police Service Areas. As a result of this analysis, Victoria Police initiated proactive fire patrols and investigations on specific persons of interest.

The Arson and Explosives Squad has now includes a criminal profiler to assist investigators in bushfire arson cases across the State with investigative strategies and interview techniques.

Victoria Police has participated in, and presented at, a number of national workshops to advance bushfire arson prevention.

Building Effective Cooperative Partnerships - Victoria Police and the fire services have reviewed interagency cooperative arrangements on the prevention of bushfire arson in Victoria and agreed to develop a revised interagency agreement. In principle agreement has been achieved with completion of the agreement expected by the end of June 2011.

MFB and CFA investigators joined the Victoria Police's Arson and Explosives Squad during the 2009-10 high risk bushfire period to assist police investigations. Timely fire agency data on bushfire incidents is provided to Victoria Police to enable the identification of serial bushfire arson activity.

On 7 February 2010, the 'Extinguish Arson' Crime Stoppers/Victoria Police community awareness campaign was launched, supported by CFA and MFB. The campaign

distributed 50,000 posters across the State together with widespread news media promotion.

On 17 December 2010, the Crime Stoppers Bushfire Arson Hotline summer campaign was launched. The initiative asked Victorians visiting, living or working in bushfire-prone areas to call Crime Stoppers if they witnessed any deliberate or reckless lighting of fires during the summer period.

Victoria Police supported a more extensive Community Promotion Campaign on Arson in February 2011. This joint media awareness campaign was developed in conjunction with Crime Stoppers Victoria and their media partners. This involved:

- an Arson Hotline information commercial presented in metropolitan and regional areas by:
 - o Channel 9 and WIN TV network; and
 - o Val Morgan Cinema group;
 - o newspaper inserts in the Weekly Times and Leader newspapers in January 2011;
- information and warning billboards and posters distributed through CFA and timber plantation owners; and
- the distribution of sandwich board signage for placement at suspicious fire scenes within Victoria Police and to CFA, DSE and MFB.

Delivering a Statewide Coordinated Approach - Victoria Police's analysis of suspicious vegetation fires over the past 10 years revealed that only 13 of its 56 Police Service Areas had not experienced such fires. It used geo-spatial analysis to identify bushfire arson hotspot locations and periods to inform local police managers' decision on anti-arson efforts for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 bushfire seasons.

Victoria Police enhanced its Accountability and Resource Model, which informs the categorisation and prioritisation of the police response to crime, to ensure regional Detectives would investigate suspected bushfire incidents.

Victoria Police undertook a review of bushfire arson activity and research material to identify the most vulnerable groups at risk of committing arson offences and examined opportunities to improve support arrangements for these groups.

Local Action Informed by Predictive Risk Assessment - Victoria Police conducted a review to identify more effective anti-arson strategies for the future, including work with local government to make some facilities within high risk areas less vulnerable to arson attack. The outcomes of this review were communicated to Police Service Area commanders in 41 high risk areas through a series of workshops held in October 2010.

There was an increase in both the number of high visibility police patrols in high risk bushfire arson locations and interaction between regional police and local fire brigades in rural areas during the high risk period of the 2009-10 fire season.

Victoria Police ran "Operation Firesetter" from 1 November 2010 until April 2011, and a final report on its outcomes is scheduled for 1 June 2011. High visibility statewide anti-bushfire arson police patrols focused on high risk locations during the fire risk period, particularly when the fire danger rating was "Severe" or above. It also includes areas where there is serial arson activity.

This Operation entailed:

- the development of geo-spatial analysis charts for all bushfire arson risk areas;
- the development of an arson profile targeting tool for the use of front-line police;
- the implementation of bushfire prevention, intelligence and enforcement strategies at the 41 “at risk” Police Service Areas;
- an additional thirty police investigators being trained in advanced arson investigation techniques;
- bushfire arson information being provided to Associate Arson Reserve (120 Detectives across the State);
- a high profile news media and Crime Stoppers campaign to promote anti-arson efforts over the summer period; and
- live streaming of fire incident data from fire agencies to the Arson and Explosives Squad to assist in the earlier identification of serial arson activity.

In the 2010-11 fire season there was a marked decrease in serial arson activity within Victoria, due in part to the mild fire season.

Creating Increased Organisational Capability - Following a review and gap analysis of existing Victoria Police arson investigation training and bushfire arson strategy, a revised ten day course was designed. Arson Investigation Guidelines were also distributed to all Victoria Police Officers outlining best practice investigation of bushfire arson. In addition, subject matter experts (from police and the fire agencies) visited all investigative groups in Victoria to promote a better understanding of investigating bushfire arson.

120 additional police officers commenced work in the Operational Response Unit on 1 March 2010. This new unit is made up of police officers specifically recruited and trained to undertake targeted law-enforcement operations, including bolstering arson operations during the bushfire season.

Victoria Police has also created a 120-strong Associate Arson Investigator Reserve of Detectives, who have undertaken specialist arson investigation training to better support bushfire arson investigations across the State.

\$2m has been committed towards further equipping Crime Stoppers and Victoria Police to gather information from the community about possible arsonists to target police activity. This includes a Crime Stoppers Arson Hotline (1800 333 000) and the previously mentioned campaign to encourage the public to report information and suspicious activity.

Victoria Police recruited two intelligence analysts in March 2011 to assess this and other information to inform police in targeting its operations.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Victoria Police’s Crime Department Strategy Group is reviewing the Phoenix Task Force analysis into bushfire victim behaviour during the 2009 fires to identify actions to inform policies and strategies aimed at minimising the harmful impact of bushfires. The review will be complete by 31 July 2011.

Crime Stoppers has undertaken to run another intensive Anti-Arson campaign for the 2011-12 fire season.

As an adjunct to the campaigns, Crime Stoppers and Monash University's Sustainability Institute are looking to undertake research into the psychological drivers and inhibitors for people within small communities to report suspicions of persons known or likely to commit arson.

Victoria Police is also working with Monash University to develop two research project proposals. The first project involves a study to examine the psychology of fire setting and is currently before the Victoria Police Research Co-ordinating Committee. The second project proposes to examine the motivation and behaviours of bushfire arsonists is currently under development and is expected to be submitted for the Research Co-ordinating Committee's consideration by 31 August 2011.

The outcome of these studies would assist police better understand arsonist and refine arson prevention and detection strategies.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 36 (National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson).

RECOMMENDATION 36

The Commonwealth, states and territories continue to pursue the National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia, giving priority to producing a nationally consistent framework for data collection and evaluating current and proposed programs in order to identify and share best-practice approaches.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

On 25 March 2009, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, The Hon Robert McClelland MP, chaired the inaugural National Forum to Reduce Deliberate Bushfires. Representatives from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, state and territory police and fire agencies, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Bushfire CRC attended this Forum.

The Forum drew together examples of bushfire arson prevention and education initiatives from around the nation, and identified national priorities for the prevention of bushfire arson. The Report from that forum is available on the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department website, www.ag.gov.au. It sets out strategies in five areas: environmental and situational strategies; criminal justice responses; community education; evidence base; and enabling strategies.

The national priorities agreed at the inaugural Forum informed the development of a *National Work Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson* in Australia. Both the Ministerial Councils of Emergency Management and Police Ministers endorsed the work plan at their November 2009 meetings. The focus of the work plan is on those aspects of emergency management that will benefit from national planning, coordination, resource sharing and consistency. It builds on existing programs in emergency management and leverages off work in other sectors. The work plan recognises that the key to preventing and reducing bushfire arson is maximising cooperation between fire agencies, police, social services, the criminal justice system and all levels of government.

A second national Forum was held in May 2010. Its three key focus areas were better national collaboration, better law enforcement responses and better community education and engagement. A summary report of the Forum is available on the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department website, www.ag.gov.au.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Senior Victorian police and fire services representatives have been, and will continue to be, active participants and contributors at these national Forums when they are convened by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.

Victoria Police and DoJ will prepare a progress report on Victoria's initiatives for submission to the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management. As yet, the Council has not fixed a reporting date.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Interim Report Recommendation 11.1 (Commonwealth response).
Final Report Recommendation 35 (arson prevention).

CHAPTER SIX – PLANNING AND BUILDING

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND BUILDING FRAMEWORK

The Government has brought its response to the Commission's recommendations on the planning and building system together into an Integrated Planning and Building Framework. This reflects the integrated nature of the Commission's recommendations and the resultant changes proposed for the planning and building systems. The changes are proposed to strengthen the consideration of bushfire at different stages of the planning process and better integrate the planning and building systems.

DPCD, DSE, the Building Commission and the CFA are collaborating in the development of the \$19m Framework with input from the Fire Services Commissioner. The MAV and councils are also supporting the development of new provisions.

The Integrated Planning and Building Framework has two components.

Component 1 - Bushfire Hazard and Biodiversity Mapping

The Government has allocated \$13.8m this Component of the Framework, which includes:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Recommendation 37.1 | <p>A new statewide bushfire hazard map, which will utilise the latest vegetation information to identify different levels of bushfire hazard to inform the targeted application of planning and building bushfire controls.</p> <p>The new statewide bushfire hazard map will replace the existing Wildfire Management Overlay mapping used in planning schemes and the current designation of the whole of Victoria as bushfire prone in the Building Regulations.</p> <p>The statewide hazard map will be completed by September 2011.</p> |
| Recommendation 37.1 | <p>More detailed mapping for targeted high risk and high priority areas. This more detailed hazard mapping will inform the statewide hazard map and assist with the development of local land use and bushfire policies and plans.</p> <p>The detailed hazard mapping will be completed by July 2012.</p> |
| Recommendation 43 | <p>Detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping for targeted high risk and high priority areas will assist in balancing the conservation of native vegetation and the management of bushfire risk.</p> <p>The detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping will be completed by July 2012.</p> |

Component 2 – Planning and Building System Improvements

The Government has allocated \$5.1m to second Component of the Framework, which includes:

Recommendation 37.2	Introducing a new statewide bushfire hazard designation framework to inform the targeted application of planning and building controls. This will be based on the statewide hazard map prepared in Component 1 of the Framework.
Recommendation 37.3	Finalising the alignment of site-assessment methods for planning and building purposes.
Recommendation 38	Producing regional and local land use and settlement planning policy responses for bushfire risk.
Recommendation 39.1	Updating the State planning policy for bushfires.
Recommendation 39.2	Reviewing the statutory tools for regulating development on small lots in high bushfire risk areas.
Recommendation 39.3	Implementing a new bushfire management overlay to replace the existing Wildfire Management Overlay.
Recommendation 40	Amending planning system guidance for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions to accommodate changes proposed as part of the new bushfire overlay.
Recommendation 41	Design of changes to planning provisions relating to native vegetation removal for bushfire-related purposed.
Recommendation 45	Producing model local planning policies, which can be adapted and adopted by Councils.
Recommendation 52	The development of an appropriate mechanism for sign-off of any permit condition imposed under the bushfire overlay and the regular assessment of landowners' compliance with conditions.

In conjunction with the completion of Component 1, DPCD will prepare a package of improved planning and building requirements as set out in Component 2 for approval by the Minister for Planning in September 2011.

The remainder of this Chapter provides a more detailed overview of the Government's response to the Commission's recommendations but will, where appropriate, refer back to the Integrated Planning and Building Framework to avoid duplication.

RECOMMENDATION 37

The State identify a central point of responsibility for and expertise in mapping bushfire risk to:

- 37.1 review urgently the mapping criteria at present used by the Country Fire Authority to map the Wildfire Management Overlay, to ensure that the mapping used to determine building and planning controls is based on the best available science and takes account of all relevant aspects of bushfire risk
- 37.2 map and designate Bushfire-prone Areas for the purposes of planning and building controls, in consultation with municipal councils and fire agencies
- 37.3 finalise the alignment of site-assessment methods for planning and building purposes, taking into account bushfire risk to human safety as well as to property.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

A number of changes to Victoria's building and planning regime were made to assist households to prepare their properties for the 2009-10 fire season and to ensure that the latest building standards applied to all new buildings constructed in Victoria including:

- applying the Wildfire Management Overlay in municipalities where the overlay had not been introduced and updating it where needed in other council areas;
- clarifying residents' entitlement to reduce fuel loads around their home by introducing the simple "10/30 right", which will apply until the new planning provisions for bushfire and vegetation removal are implemented as set out in Component 2 of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework above;
- introducing the new *Australian Standard AS 3959-2009* building standard and ensuring that it applies to the whole of the State; and
- amending the Building Regulations to incorporate standards for private bushfire shelters (as recommended in the Commission's second Interim Report in November 2009).

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Recommendation 37.1 –DSE, CFA, DPCD and the Building Commission, with input from an expert reference group, developed bushfire hazard mapping criteria in April 2011. This work will inform DPCD in the development of the statewide bushfire hazard designation framework in September 2011.

Recommendation 37.2 - DSE began updating vegetation data in November 2010 and will apply the revised mapping criteria to available new vegetation data to produce the statewide hazard map. The statewide hazard map will then be progressively updated as new information becomes available.

DSE has commenced detailed hazard mapping for selected high risk, high priority areas that will assist the development of improved local land use and bushfire plans and policies. This work will be completed by July 2012. As this more detailed information becomes available, DSE will continue to update the statewide hazard map.

Based on the expert advice of DSE and CFA, the framework will clearly identify the different levels of bushfire hazard at a statewide scale and corresponding risk graduated responses in the planning and building systems.

The new hazard mapping will be used to differentiate the areas where a planning and/or building response is required. It will also provide information to replace the current designation of the whole of Victoria as bushfire prone.

Recommendation 37.3 – Currently, there are two approaches for undertaking a site assessment to determine a building's potential exposure to bushfire in Victoria. Planned changes to the Building Regulations and the Victorian Planning Provisions will integrate these assessments to form a single approach to site assessment based on *Australian Standard AS3959-2009*.

The site assessment undertaken using this Standard will also be used to determine defensible space requirements. Defensible space is an area between vegetation and a building which is managed to minimise fuel loads to enhance protection from fire.

A working group of Building Commission, DPCD, DSE and CFA representatives has been working on a project to align the site assessment methods for planning and building purposes. The aim of the project is to achieve a consistent approach in planning and building by using the same assessment methodology for determining construction requirements regardless of whether the assessment is made at the planning or building stage.

DPCD will prepare a package of improved planning and building requirements for approval by the Minister for Planning for implementation in September 2011. This will include provisions, which identify that the methodology set out in *AS3959-2009 Construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas* for determining a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment will underpin how bushfire hazard for a site is assessed.

This gives effect to the Commission's recommendation that site assessment methods be aligned for planning and building purposes (Recommendation 37.3). The alignment of site assessment methodologies is supported by consultation with an expert panel, consisting of fire engineers and people experienced in bushfire protection and mitigation, convened by the CFA and the Building Commission in February 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 38

The State implement a regional settlement policy that:

- 38.1 takes account of the management of bushfire risk, including that associated with small, undeveloped rural lots
- 38.2 includes a process for responding to bushfire risk at the planning stage for new urban developments in regional cities, the process being similar to that used for new developments in Melbourne's Urban Growth Zone.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The *Regional Victoria Settlement Framework* is a plan for growth and development of regional cities and centres as Victoria's population grows, and has statutory effect under the Victorian Planning Provisions. The Framework recognises that regional cities, centres, towns and communities are networked with each other and the regions around

them and, as the regional cities grow, they will develop improved connections with each other and their hinterlands.

In July 2010, the *State Planning Policy Framework* was updated (Amendment VC66) to:

- give effect to regional planning principles, including the Regional Victoria Settlement Framework map; and
- establish the principles for sustainable growth that will apply to settlement planning in Victoria's regions and rural areas, including Melbourne's hinterland.

The new *State Planning Policy* now specifically discourages the development of small isolated rural lots and addresses the impacts of climate change and natural hazards, including bushfire, on new development.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The revised State planning policy for bushfire risk will give priority to the protection of human life. This will require a risk based approach to land use planning in bushfire hazard areas and require land use planning to be integrated with and support other bushfire risk management and mitigation strategies.

The new hazard and biodiversity mapping, which forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework, will inform the development of regional and local land use and settlement planning policy responses to bushfire risk. The new hazard map will be completed by September 2011 and the more detailed hazard and biodiversity mapping will be completed by July 2012.

Over the next four years, the Government, in partnership with local councils, will develop eight regional land use plans to provide for more comprehensive land use and urban planning across rural and regional Victoria. These plans will anticipate population growth and change, protect and manage environmental assets and risks and integrate and deliver on social, economic and environmental objectives.

Feeding into these regional land use plans will be the Regional Bushfire Land Use Assessments. These Assessments will inform strategic planning at the regional and municipal level to ensure that, in planning the development of regional areas, bushfire issues are properly managed. The studies include an analysis of lot patterns and other relevant factors and will also inform the revised State Planning Policy for bushfire and the development of regional and local planning policy responses.

An initial pilot of the studies has begun. Following evaluation of that pilot, the studies will be rolled out to all regions and will be completed by September 2011 in line with the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

This work will inform the development of a model local planning policy which councils can adopt or adapt to suit their local circumstances as part of the Local Planning Policy Framework.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 39

The State amend the Victoria Planning Provisions relating to bushfire to ensure that the provisions give priority to the protection of human life, adopt a clear objective of substantially restricting development in the areas of highest bushfire risk - giving due consideration to biodiversity conservation - and provide clear guidance for decision makers. The amendments should take account of the conclusions reached by the Commission and do the following:

- 39.1 outline the State's objectives for managing bushfire risk through land-use planning in an amended state planning policy for bushfire, as set out in clause 15.07 of the Victoria Planning Provisions
- 39.2 allow municipal councils to include a minimum lot size for use of land for a dwelling, both with and without a permit, in a schedule to each of the Rural Living Zone, Green Wedge Zone, Green Wedge A Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone
- 39.3 amend clause 44.06 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to provide a comprehensive Bushfire-prone Overlay provision.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Bushfire Planning Provisions Team was established in DPCD in January 2011 to respond to the planning and building recommendations and to deliver Component 2 of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework. The team is leading the development of changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions so that our planning system responds effectively to protecting human life and making Victoria's communities safer.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Component 2 of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework will implement new and updated planning provisions, which respond to this recommendation.

Recommendation 39.1 - DPCD will implement a revised State Planning Policy informed by the regional bushfire land use risk assessment studies currently underway (Recommendation 38). The policy will form part of a comprehensive package with other changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions. Joint working arrangements with the MAV have been agreed to secure the input of Councils from across Victoria to this work, including the new bushfire overlay, vegetation management and local planning policies.

Recommendation 39.2 – DPCD will review the statutory tools for regulating development on small lots in high bushfire risk areas with other planning provisions for bushfire. The regional bushfire land use assessment studies will assist in reviewing the different tools and determining which will be most appropriate for implementing Victoria's bushfire safety policies. A minimum lot size will be a part of this package if it is determined to be the most effective tool.

Recommendation 39.3 – DPCD will develop a new bushfire overlay in line with Component 2 of the Integrated Building and Planning Framework. The above changes will form part of the package of improved planning and building requirements which will take effect in September 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework, in addition to Recommendations 52 (fire prevention notice regimes) and 54 (delegation of CFA Chief Officer's power to issue fire prevention notices).

RECOMMENDATION 40

The Country Fire Authority amend its guidelines for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions in the Bushfire-prone Overlay in order to accommodate the amendments to the Wildfire Management Overlay that are implemented as a result of Recommendation 39 and make the guidelines available to municipal councils and the public. The revised guidelines should do the following:

- 40.1 substantially restrict new developments and subdivisions in those areas of highest risk in the Bushfire-prone Overlay
- 40.2 set out the CFA's guidelines for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions - including the minimum defendable space requirements for different risk levels
- 40.3 clarify that the CFA will approve new developments and subdivisions only if the recommended bushfire protection measures - including the minimum defendable space - can be created and maintained on a continuing basis
- 40.4 emphasise the need for enduring permit conditions - in particular, conditions for the creation and maintenance of minimum defendable space to be maintained for the life of the development.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The response to this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

The DPCD, supported by the CFA, will jointly complete the review of existing mitigation requirements by September 2011. In response to Recommendation 40, CFA will provide guidance to the community on options available for development in locations of high bushfire risk, including subdivisions and individual allotments. This guidance will incorporate advice on how to best prepare a development plan that considers:

- safety siting options;
- minimum vegetation management to create a defendable space;
- minimum construction requirements, ensuring alignment with Australian Standard AS 3959 on Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas; and
- access and onsite fire fighting water requirements.

This guidance will be consistent with and complement community education advice on how to prepare for bushfire safety.

The CFA will implement this recommendation within 12 months of the amendments to the Victoria Planning Provisions under Recommendation 39 being made.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 41

The State:

- 41.1 amend the Victoria Planning Provisions to require that, when assessing a permit to remove native vegetation around an existing dwelling, the responsible authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, as referral authority, take into account fire hazard and give weight to fire protection purposes
- 41.2 develop guidelines for determining the maximum level of native vegetation removal for bushfire risk mitigation, beyond which level the application would be rejected.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The “10/30 right” was introduced before the 2009-10 fire season to simplify residents’ entitlements to reduce fuel loads around their homes. In summary, the “10/30 right” permits residents to remove trees within 10 metres of their dwelling and to clear vegetation other than trees within 30 metres of their home. More detailed information on this “right” can be found in the brochure “Making Victoria Fire Ready - Frequently Asked Questions: 10/30 Right and Fence Line Clearing” on DSE’s website, www.dse.vic.gov.au.

The “10/30 right” has been extended to 1 March 2012. The new planning provisions for bushfire and vegetation removal in response to the Commission’s findings behind Recommendations 37, 39 and 41 are planned to commence in September 2011.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The response to this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

The management of vegetation is central to mitigating bushfire risks for both existing and new development. DPCD, in conjunction with DSE and the CFA, is currently reviewing bushfire-related vegetation controls.

The aim of this work is to ensure that controls provide certainty and guidance to councils and landowners about vegetations removal – both with and without a planning permit.

DSE and MAV have established a joint Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group with 13 local government members as well as representatives from VicRoads, DPCD and the CFA. The Reference Group will provide advice on the operation of vegetation-related controls and what guidance on native vegetation removal for bushfire risk is necessary. It will also support the development of new Victoria Planning Provisions relating to native vegetation.

DSE will undertake a program over four years to enhance its role in developing vegetation policies, provisions and guidelines. This project will also design and implement a collective offset solution (Recommendation 42) and implement recommendations relating to roadside vegetation management, including the development of a new exemption to allow road managers to better manage native vegetation on roadsides to reduce bushfire risk.

The project has two phases:

- engagement on, and design of, changes to policy frameworks and the Victoria Planning Provisions (to be completed by July 2011);
- implementation including training for DSE regional staff (developing specialist skills), local government staff and road managers; and community awareness and education. This stage of the project will begin in September 2011 following amendments to the Victoria Planning Provisions.

The timelines for this project are aligned to those of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework being led by DPCD.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework, in addition to Recommendations 42 (native vegetation collective offset), 60 (roadside vegetation management program) and 61 (roadside clearing and bushfire prevention activities).

RECOMMENDATION 42

The Department of Sustainability and Environment develop and administer a collective offset solution for individual landholders, who are permitted to remove native vegetation for the purpose of fire protection.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE has been working with five councils - Yarra Ranges, Hume, Whittlesea, Baw Baw and Greater Bendigo - to develop an 'over the counter' native vegetation offset schemes for landholders within those local government areas. This model will form the basis of the broader collective offset solution where DSE will oversee collective offset schemes with Councils administering the schemes where a clear need is established.

The joint Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group, as outlined in response to Recommendation 41, will inform and assist the implementation of this recommendation.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DSE will work with MAV and local councils to implement 'collective offset' schemes as part of component two of the Integrated Building and Planning Hazard Mapping and Risk Response Framework.

DSE will work with councils to extend the framework for 'over the counter' offset schemes. Councils will then be able to administer these schemes with some on-going support and oversight from DSE. DSE will work with target councils over the next two years to establish these schemes.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 41 (native vegetation removal).

RECOMMENDATION 43

The Department of Sustainability and Environment conduct biodiversity mapping identifying flora, fauna and any threatened species throughout Victoria and make the results publicly available. The format used should be compatible with that used for Bushfire-prone Area mapping.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The response to this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

As set out under Recommendation 37.2, DSE has begun detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping project of targeted high risk, high priority areas. This project will be completed by July 2012. This mapping will assist in balancing the conservation of native vegetation with the management of bushfire risk in developing local planning responses for those locations.

VicRoads will also use this mapping to inform road management responses for safety, access and maintenance.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 44

The Country Fire Authority produce for community guidance material on fire-resistant landscape and garden design, including a list of fire-resistant species.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

CFA will engage appropriate technical advisors to provide advice on the content of the community guidance material on fire-resistant landscape and garden design.

CFA will use this advice to develop community guidance material, which will be readily available to the community through various media including the CFA website, the Victorian Bushfire Information Line, community education programs and the Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool.

This advice will be released by December 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Interim Report Recommendation 6.2 (advice to community) and the application of the Household Self-Assessment Tool.

RECOMMENDATION 45

The State press municipal councils - in particular, Murrindindi Shire Council - to urgently adopt a bushfire policy in their Local Planning Policy Framework and incorporate bushfire risk management in their planning policies and strategies for rebuilding communities such as Marysville, Kinglake and others affected by the January-February 2009 fires.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

On 10 February 2009, the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments established the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) to oversee and coordinate the largest recovery and rebuilding program Victoria has ever faced. VBRRA has worked with communities, businesses, charities, local councils and other government departments to help rebuild communities affected by the bushfires.

Each affected community has different needs and the priority is to help regions, towns and individuals to rebuild and recover in a way that is safe, timely, efficient, cost effective and respectful of those different needs.

Following an extensive consultation process with the community, the Murrindindi Shire Council, local businesses and key stakeholders, the Marysville and Triangle Urban Design Framework was included in the Murrindindi Planning Scheme in January 2010. The framework will guide decisions about the location and design of buildings, streets and public spaces, and rebuilding projects for the Marysville and Triangle communities.

The vision for the framework is to rebuild Marysville as a safer, more sustainable town with a distinct character, a high quality environment and as a memorable place to visit. Building resilience to bushfire threat is an important objective of the framework and bushfire safety will be considered within the context of housing, building design, gardens, landscape management and the edge of town interface.

DPCD agreed a joint work program for the development of local planning policies and strategies (incorporating bushfire risk management) with the MAV and councils in February 2011. A workshop was held in April 2011, and further workshops are planned for June and August, to develop model local policies in partnership with councils.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The response to this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

DPCD will produce model local planning policies by September 2011, working with the MAV and councils. The content of the model policy will be informed by the Integrated Planning and Building Framework and will be piloted in five planning schemes identified jointly by DPCD and MAV. This is scheduled to occur by the end of 2011 after the changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions are made in accordance with the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

The Government anticipates the remaining councils will adapt and implement the model policy, if required, with DPCD's assistance, throughout 2012. The level of bushfire risk and the availability of new, more detailed hazard and risk information will be used to determine the priority for this assistance.

The Government has also announced that 10 bushfire affected councils would receive \$120,000 each to assist them to prepare and implement necessary changes to their planning schemes without imposing a burden on ratepayers. The 10 councils to receive funding were selected based on the extent of area covered by the existing Wildfire Management Overlay and include Alpine, Baw Baw, Colac Otway, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Hepburn, Mansfield, Nillumbik, Wellington and Yarra Ranges. The funding will also go towards education and training to improve bushfire risk management in the planning system.

To complement rebuilding strategies, the Bushfire Response Team at DPCD is working with the Murrindindi Shire Council to develop a bushfire local planning policy that can be adopted in the Murrindindi Local Planning Policy Framework once the Integrated Planning and Building Framework is in place.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 46

The State develop and implement a retreat and resettlement strategy for existing developments in areas of unacceptably high bushfire risk, including a scheme for non-compulsory acquisition by the State of land in these areas.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Government is developing a proposed scheme to implement this recommendation.

Key features of the program will be:

- the development of criteria to assess what constitutes an “unacceptably high bushfire risk”. While the Commission indicated a number of factors the State should consider in developing the program, it did not provide a formula to determine eligibility and assess relevant risk factors. Such factors may include:
 - o the potential severity of the bushfire hazard;
 - o the siting and construction of the dwelling;
 - o egress from the property;
 - o proximity to designated shelter;
- that voluntary acquisition will be considered as a last resort where other mitigation measures are not feasible; and
- the scheme will involve non-compulsory acquisition of land – the owners must be willing to sell and the Government willing to buy.

The 2011-12 Budget includes \$5m for the first stage of this program. Future budget allocations from the Government’s \$50m election commitment will be based on community interest in the program.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government will consult with the community before implementing the program, which is expected to commence before the end of 2011.

RECOMMENDATION 47

Standards Australia do the following:

- 47.1 amend the objective of AS 3959-2009 *Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas*, to ensure that it incorporates reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack
- 47.2 review, and amend as appropriate, the testing methods prescribed in its standards for *Tests on Elements of Construction for Buildings Exposed to Simulated Bushfire Attack* (AS 1530.8.1 and AS 1530.8.2) to ensure that, so far as is possible, the methods provide a reliable predictor of the performance of construction elements under bushfire conditions.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

The Government supports this recommendation while noting it is directed to Standards Australia.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

A joint working group with representatives from the DPCD, Building Commission and CFA completed a high level review of *Australian Standard AS3959-2009 Construction in Bushfire-prone Areas* and associated matters in April 2010. The recommendations from this group have been provided to Standards Australia for consideration in future amendments to AS3959.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Standards Australia has advised it will amend the objective of AS 3959-2009, to ensure that it incorporates reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack (Recommendation 47.1). The Australian Building Codes Board is considering a similar recommendation (Recommendation 48) and this recommendation has been brought to the attention of Standards Australia committee FP-020 and will be considered as part of a future amendment to AS 3959-2009.

Australian Standards committees have already begun to review and amend the testing methods prescribed in its standards for *Tests on Elements of Construction for Buildings Exposed to Simulated Bushfire Attack* (AS 1530.8.1 and AS 1530.8.2) (Rec 47.2). Any new standards development project work will need to follow usual processes for the approval of Standards development projects.

The State, through the Building Commission, continues to liaise with Standards Australia on this recommendation.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 37 (develop bushfire risk planning and building framework) and 48 (building codes and standards).

RECOMMENDATION 48

Australian Building Codes Board do the following:

- 48.1 amend the performance requirements in the Building Code of Australia to ensure that they incorporate reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack
- 48.2 work with Standards Australia to effect expeditious continuing review and development of AS 3959, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas, and other bushfire-related standards referred to in the Building Code of Australia
- 48.3 negotiate with Standards Australia and SAI Global Ltd an arrangement for free online access to *AS3959-2009, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas*, other Australian Standards referred to in *AS3959-2009*, and any other bushfire-related Australian Standards referred to in the Building Code of Australia
- 48.4 amend the Building Code of Australia to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)
- 48.5 include in the Building Code of Australia bushfire construction provisions for non-residential buildings that will be occupied by people who are particularly vulnerable to bushfire attack, such as schools, child care centres, hospitals and aged care facilities.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Building Commission is working with the Australian Building Codes Board to bring about changes to *AS3959 -2009* and in the development of a new standard for bushfire construction of non-residential buildings.

The Building Commission has met with the Australian Building Codes Board to confirm Victoria's support for this recommendation and to seek the recommended changes. The Australian Building Codes Board have committed to support and work with the Building Commission on the Commission's recommendations.

The Australian Building Codes Board's advice is that:

- an amended performance requirement to incorporate ember attack should be included in the public comment draft of Building Code of Australia 2012 (BCA);
- the Board has agreed that the deemed-to-satisfy provisions for BAL-FZ should be retained within the BCA;
- the Chairman, Building Commission will meet with Standards Australia to discuss free access to AS3959; and
- work is underway to inform a decision on the appropriate means of addressing the life safety risks from bushfire attack associated with non-residential buildings.

Victoria will work with the other States and Territories to bring about free access to standards relating to bushfire protection. The outcome is not one that Victoria alone can bring about.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Building Commission will continue to liaise with the Australian Building Codes Board on this issue to bring these changes into effect.

The Building Commission represents Victoria on the Australian Building Codes Board Bushfire Working Group, a sub-committee of the Building Codes Committee, which

supports the Board on matters arising from the Commission and in particular Recommendation 48.

Implementation of Recommendation 48.3 requires the support of all jurisdictions. Victoria wrote to the Commonwealth Government and all State and Territory Governments seeking support for free access to the Building Code of Australia and building standards. Victoria has placed this issue on the agenda of the next Australian Building Ministers Forum

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 4 (shelter options) and 49 (bushfire construction provisions).

RECOMMENDATION 49

The State modify its adoption of the Building Code of Australia for the following purposes:

- 49.1 to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)
- 49.2 to apply bushfire construction provisions to non-residential buildings that will be occupied by people who are particularly vulnerable to bushfire attack, such as schools, child care centres, hospitals and aged care facilities
- 49.3 other than in exceptional circumstances, to apply a minimum AS 3959-2009 construction level of BAL-12.5 to all new buildings and extensions in bushfire-prone areas.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

A Ministerial Direction (MD3) is already in place in Victoria requiring a Bushfire Attack Level assessment from AS3959-2009 be undertaken for all government and government funded buildings to inform the building design. This Direction took effect on 1 February 2010.

Following a request from Victoria, the Australian Building Codes Board has confirmed that it will develop options for consideration by the Australian Building Ministers Forum. The Building Codes Committee Bushfires Sub-Committee is considering this matter. The Building Commission represents Victoria on this Sub-Committee.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Residential Buildings and Extensions - The Building Commission is currently researching case studies of houses that survived the 2009 Bushfires to gather data for analysis on building in the Flame Zone. It will continue to collect data to compare buildings constructed using the deemed-to-satisfy provisions as against alternative solutions. The Commission will provide this information in a position paper to the Australian Building Codes Board and Standards Australia to inform their ongoing review of AS3959-2009.

The Steering Committee overseeing the development of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework is considering the implementation of recommendation 49.1 as part of the Framework in recognition that no single treatment constitutes a total solution to

bushfire risk. That examination includes consideration of non-regulatory mechanisms to achieve the Commission's intent for performance-based solutions.

The Government will amend the Building Regulations 2006 by September 2011 to apply a minimum AS 3959-2009 construction level of BAL-12.5 to all new residential buildings and extensions in bushfire-prone areas. This work is related to the implementation of Recommendation 37.1 (development of a new statewide bushfire hazard map to inform the targeted application of planning and building bushfire controls).

Non Residential Buildings - DPCD and the Building Commission have received \$700,000 to support the development of a new building standard for bushfire construction of non-residential buildings, particularly Class 9 buildings. This funding will be used to:

- develop and complete performance requirements for non residential buildings that could be adopted by Victoria ahead of the national standard by September 2011;
- make any amendments required to the Building Regulations 2006 in order to adopt the performance requirements for use in Victoria by March 2012; and
- fund Victoria's contribution to the Australian Building Codes Board's development of the national standard.

The Government expects the work undertaken in Victoria to develop performance requirements for non-residential buildings will inform the national process and enable a smooth transition once the national standards are available for adoption.

Victoria has requested that the Australia Building Code Board complete a national standard for public-use buildings for inclusion in the 2013 Building Code of Australia. The Building Commission is liaising with the Australian Building Codes Board to confirm the timelines following initial scoping discussions and the development of a project plan for Victoria by the Building Commission.

The Australian Building Codes Board has:

- noted Victoria's call that the highest priority should be given to the development of a standard for construction requirements for Class 9 (non-residential public use) buildings; and
- agreed that it will continue to work closely with the Victorian Building Commission on responses to the Commission's recommendations.

In the interim, the Australian Building Codes Board have commenced a study, in consultation with the Planning Officials' Group, to determine the current situation and the respective roles of planning and building controls in each State and Territory. As part of an integrated response, the Australian Building Codes Board have advised that State and Territory planning instruments should also address increased risks of construction of relevant non-residential buildings in bushfire prone areas. The results of the study will be used by the Australian Building Codes Board to inform the decision and future action on the appropriate construction response and building controls as a means of addressing the life safety risk from bushfire attack associated with specified Class 9 buildings such as schools, child care centres, hospitals and aged care facilities.

Once a national standard is finalised, the Building Commission will produce a guideline for retrofitting existing Class 9 buildings in bushfire prone areas.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 37.1 (develop bushfire risk planning and building framework).

RECOMMENDATION 50

Standards Australia move expeditiously to develop a standard for bushfire sprinklers and sprayers.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

The Government supports this recommendation while noting it is directed to Standards Australia.

The Plumbing Industry Commission has met with Standards Australia to confirm Victoria's support for this recommendation.

Standards Australia has undertaken a significant amount of scoping and preliminary work in preparation for the committee's work and development of a standard.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DPCD and the Plumbing Industry Commission will continue to liaise with Standards Australia in the development and implementation of the standard.

Standards Australia has advised that they expect to complete the development of the standard by mid 2012.

RECOMMENDATION 51

The Victorian Building Commission, in conjunction with the Country Fire Authority, develop, publish and provide to the community and industry information about ways in which existing buildings in bushfire-prone areas can be modified to incorporate bushfire safety measures.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Building Commission has held a range of seminars and education forums for industry and consumers since the early 2009 bushfires. These include:

- 23 full-day seminars training 1800 practitioners across the State on AS3959-2009. The Building Commission has also continued industry training utilising industry forums;
- 16 seminars for consumers on bushfire safety building issues between September 2010 and December 2010 educating 900 residents; and
- presentations at eight bushfire expos and nine community information meetings.

Following the introduction of the Private Bushfire Shelter (Bunker) Regulations, the Building Commission also held seminars to educate industry manufacturers and consumers on the new requirements. Approximately 150 people attended these seminars.

The Building Commission has developed and published a number of other brochures on bushfire building issues to educate residents and industry. These brochures include:

- a guide to the safe return to your property;
- a guide to temporary homes and buildings in bushfire affected areas;
- temporary housing guide;
- bushfire bulletin magazine; and
- Bushfire Attack Level guide.

Regional Victorians looking to rebuild or renovate can now retrofit their homes using a new guide developed by the Building Commission and the CFA. The guide contains simple and easy steps for home owners to modify their home to help increase its chances of surviving a fire. It lists building recommendations for owners to retrofit their home to withstand a bushfire up to and including Bushfire Attack Level 28. It was released on 15 October 2010 as is available on the CFA website, www.cfa.vic.gov.au. Copies were also circulated to local councils, distributed at bushfire expos and seminars and the CFA provides the guidelines to participants in community meetings.

As part of a targeted education program on modifying homes within the 52 high risk townships to improve bushfire safety, the CFA initiated the Advice to Property Owners project. As part of this project CFA members discuss with property owners defensible space on their property, including vegetation management, and any potential improvements to the property using the Retrofit Guide. The guide is provided to property owners as part of the assessment.

The Building Commission has worked closely with VBRRA and assigned a technical officer to provide service at the Rebuilding Advisory Centres in Marysville and Kinglake. This officer also gave advice at the two Affordable Building Expos that VBRRA held in November 2010.

The Building Commission conducted seminars for consumers on bushfire safety building issues between September 2010 and December 2010.

Following a joint initiative between DHS, VBRRA and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, bushfire compliant demonstration homes were opened for inspection in Kinglake and Marysville on 1 February 2011. These three bedroom bushfire compliant (Bushfire Attack Level 40) homes have a six-star energy rating and a fixed construction price.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 55.1 (bushfire risk management training for industry).

RECOMMENDATION 52

The State develop and implement, in consultation with local government, a mechanism for sign-off by municipal councils of any permit conditions imposed under the Bushfire-Prone Overlay and the regular assessment of landowners' compliance with conditions.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The response to this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

DPCD, with the support of the CFA, will work with MAV to identify and develop appropriate mechanisms to:

- enable councils to check that relevant permit conditions for new developments have been complied with before the development can be occupied; and
- also support the regular assessment of future landowner compliance with such conditions.

The statutory mechanism will be introduced as part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework in September 2011.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework, in addition to Recommendation 54 (delegation of CFA Chief Officer's power to issue fire prevention notices).

RECOMMENDATION 53

The State amend s. 32 of the *Sale of Land Act 1962* to require that a vendor's statement include whether the land is in a designated Bushfire-prone Area, a statement about the standard (if any) to which the dwelling was constructed, the bushfire attack level assessment at the time of construction (where relevant) and a current bushfire attack level assessment of the site of the dwelling.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Currently, if a property is in a Wildfire Management Overlay, such information is often disclosed as part of the s.32 requirements.

DPCD is working with the Building Commission to encourage Building Inspectors and other stakeholders, such as Archicentre, who undertake pre-purchase property inspections, to include consideration of bushfire construction requirements as a standard component of their inspections and reports. These reports will provide the necessary information on the bushfire safety of a building.

Archicentre has established the Bushfire Ready Inspection Services, which undertakes an on-site inspection, including a Bushfire Attack Level assessment, and provides a written report listing the most appropriate actions to be taken to retrofit the home to improve bushfire safety.

Consumers are also encouraged to use the Building Commission and CFA guide to retrofitting of homes that will be distributed across Victoria in October 2010. (See the response to Recommendation 51 above).

The Building Commission also conducted seminars for consumers on bushfire safety building issues between September 2010 and December 2010.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government has directed DoJ to develop an amendment to s. 32 of the *Sale of Land Act 1962* so that where land is in a bushfire prone area, the vendor's statement will disclose this fact. This amendment will be introduced to the Parliament once the State Planning Policy has been revised in accordance with Recommendation 39 as part of the new Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

Such disclosure is designed to encourage prospective purchasers to ensure that any pre-purchase inspection of properties in bushfire prone areas assess the bushfire safety of the property.

RECOMMENDATION 54

The State amend the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to enable the Chief Officer to delegate the power to issue fire prevention notices.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government has directed DoJ to develop legislation to amend the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* in accordance with this recommendation for introduction to the Parliament in 2011.

What other recommendations are these actions linked to?

Final Report Recommendations 3 (local planning), 31 (hazard tree identification and notification in Municipal Emergency Management Plans) and 52 (fire prevention notice regimes).

RECOMMENDATION 55

The State initiate the development of education and training options to improve understanding of bushfire risk management in the building and planning regimes by:

- 55.1 providing regular training and guidance material to planning and building practitioners
- 55.2 helping a suitable tertiary institution design and implement a course on bushfire planning and design in Victoria.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

For the 2009-10 fire season, the Building Commission provided industry and consumer education on the interim bushfire shelter (bunker) regulations.

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect has worked with VBRRA, the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects and the Building Commission to establish an Architects Bushfire Homes Service. This service provides a range of bushfire safe home designs to consider for those people in fire affected communities, who are rebuilding.

To implement Recommendation 55.1, the Building Commission:

- held industry and community seminars between September and December 2010;
- updated the Practice Note and Guides on AS3959-2009 and made these available on its website; and
- prepared media materials in advance of the 2010-11 bushfire season that addressed education on AS3959-2009. These materials were issued at all industry and consumer education meetings and seminars.

The Building Commission and the CFA developed a short-course, Development and Building in Bushfire Prone Areas, in conjunction with the University of Technology Sydney. The aim of this five-day program is to enhance understanding and skills for assessing bushfire attack levels and controlling development and building in bushfire prone areas. Three courses have been held and a fourth is scheduled for May 2011.

The Government subsidised 90 places on this short course. These subsidised places are aimed at assisting to:

- create a pool of professionals able to undertake Bushfire Attack Level assessments to a consistent and high standard; and
- broaden the skill base of the building industry.

The Building Commission has commenced discussions with tertiary institutions with the aim of developing a tertiary course in bushfire planning and design and is developing a scope of works for the detailed development of the course.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The target date for commencement of the proposed tertiary course in bushfire building and design is July 2012.

Ongoing funding of \$50,000 per annum will be used to support subsidised places in the Bushfire Attack Level assessment course and the future university courses.

The Building Commission will continue to run industry and community education seminars on AS 3959-2009, including the site-assessment process, at regular intervals.

CHAPTER SEVEN – LAND AND FUEL MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 56

The State fund and commit to implementing a long-term program of prescribed burning based on an annual rolling target of 5 per cent minimum of public land.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE conducts planned burning and native vegetation clearing on public land to reduce the fuel loads in areas of high bushfire risk. In addition to planned clearing and planned burning, DSE has constructed strategic fuel breaks to help protect Melbourne water catchments and Otways communities from the effects of bushfire.

DSE has established a dedicated Planned Burning project to drive achievement of short term targets and examine a range of options to ensure that its longer term fuel reduction program is sustainable and effective.

DSE made draft Fire Operations Plans for July 2010-June 2013 available for comment during August 2010 and held public meetings across the State to enable local communities to view and comment on these plans.

The current Fire Operations Plans contain approximately 600 burns to deliver 200,000 hectares in 2010-11. DSE reviews each Fire Operations Plan annually and adjusts them to reflect the planned burning priorities as required.

An additional 123 full time, permanent firefighters were recruited to DSE and Parks Victoria in February 2011 to undertake planned burning and other fire management activities. Many of these full-time positions have been allocated to former seasonal firefighters, who will now work permanently to increase fire prevention and mitigation efforts across Victoria.

DSE is optimising current methods of delivering planned burns to maximise its ability to meet short term objectives, through a newly developed delivery framework. This includes the establishment of Statewide Area and District coordination teams.

DSE has enhanced its notification processes with a new 7 day outlook being published each week.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DSE and Parks Victoria will continue to increase the level of planned burning to 390,000 hectares per annum, consistent with the recommendations of the Commission and with the commitment of the Government.

DSE intends to investigate and design an improved and sustainable business model to position DSE and its partners to deliver this enhanced planned burning program into the future. This program will focus on reducing risk to life and property and be based on scientific understanding of the impacts on the landscape, industry and biodiversity.

DSE is also establishing a comprehensive monitoring and review program to ensure that the outcomes and impacts of the increased planned burning program are well understood and communicated.

DSE will continue to improve its notification systems to ensure access to timely information on planned burning activity. This will include increased use of technology such as SMS and inclusion of planned burning in the Fire Ready smart phone application.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 57-58 (prescribed burning).

RECOMMENDATION 57

The DSE report annually on prescribed burning outcomes in a manner that meets public accountability objectives, including publishing details of targets, area burnt, funds expended on the program, and impacts on biodiversity.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The DSE website provides information to the community on the scheduled planned burn program and up-to-date data on the status of planned burning for the season.

DSE has developed a performance evaluation framework that is being used to monitor current activity levels and will form the basis for future monitoring and reporting.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DSE will continue to report on the outcomes of planned burning through its Annual Report.

DSE is developing additional measures, as required, to ensure outcomes of the planned burn program are captured and reported in both budget and annual reports in accordance with this recommendation. A key area of focus will be how DSE account for the impact of all fire in the landscape, not just planned burning.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 56-59 (prescribed burning and amending the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land).

RECOMMENDATION 58

The DSE significantly upgrade its program of long-term data collection to monitor and model the effects of its prescribed burning programs and of bushfires on biodiversity in Victoria.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Since 2006, DSE has developed a fire monitoring and research program to understand the effects of fire on biodiversity at a landscape scale. This includes pre- and post-fire monitoring of flora, fauna and habitat, and research into fire mosaics.

As a result of Recommendation 58, DSE is establishing a significantly expanded program of biodiversity monitoring, known as HawkEye, in collaboration with partner organisations. It is guided by a framework that sets out key scientific and management questions. HawkEye is expanding on the existing monitoring and research program to collect and analyse data relevant to understanding how to achieve the dual objectives of fire safety and biodiversity protection. It works closely with the planned burning program.

HawkEye currently has a focus in the Otways, Mallee and foothill forests of Gippsland.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DSE plans to have the expanded monitoring program in place and operational by June 2011 and for it to grow as the planned burning program (in response to Recommendation 56) increases.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 56-57 (prescribed burning).

RECOMMENDATION 59

The Department of Sustainability and Environment amend the *Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land* in order to achieve the following:

- 59.1 provide a clear statement of objectives, expressed as measurable outcomes
- 59.2 include an explicit risk-analysis model for more objective and transparent resolution of competing objectives, where human life is the highest priority
- 59.3 specify the characteristics of fire management zones - including burn size, percentage area burnt within the prescribed burn, and residual fuel loading
- 59.4 adopt the use of the term 'bushfire' rather than 'wildfire'.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE has commenced a project to amend the *Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land*.

DSE is using existing forums to consult with peak stakeholder groups to facilitate development of the revised Code. This targeted consultation commenced in April and will run through to August 2011.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The revised draft Code of Practice will be publicly exhibited for 60 days before the end of 2011 when the community will be invited to comment on the draft Code. It will be tabled in both Houses of Parliament in Autumn 2012.

DSE fire management staff will be advised of amendments to the Code through DSE's internal communication processes. The revised Code will also be made available on DSE's external website.

Operational manuals and guidelines based on the Code will be updated once the revised Code is completed. Manuals and guidelines relating to fuel management zones will be completed by late 2012.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 56-58 (prescribed burning).

RECOMMENDATION 60

The State amend the exemptions in clause 52.17-6 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure that the provisions allow for a broad range of roadside works capable of reducing fire risk and provide specifically for a new exemption where the purpose of the works is to reduce bushfire risk.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

DSE is working with councils, MAV, VicRoads, DPCD and CFA to develop a methodology to be used to identify the nature and extent of vegetation management on roadsides necessary for reducing bushfire risk through the Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group (see Recommendations 39 & 41 for background information on the group). The group is currently working through options for the scope and operation of the new exemption to clause 52.17-6 of the Victoria Planning Provisions. The final form of the exemption will be completed by July 2011.

The Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group will consider:

- the VicRoads Roadside Fire Risk Assessment Tool and Guidelines (see Recommendation 62) as a way of guiding the application of the new exemption;
- how the tool could be practically used and applied by councils; and
- the suitability of including the tool in the new exemption for roadside works to reduce bushfire risk.

In addition, VicRoads will be trialling the assessment tool over the next few months on the arterial road network in East Gippsland and the Dandenong regions. VicRoads will report back on the findings of the trial at the July meeting of the Reference Group.

The CFA received funding of \$9.2m in the 2010 Budget to support local brigades to carry out vegetation management and a further \$2.29m, after the Commission's Final Report was released, to enhance its current roadside vegetation management program, including research and training.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The remaining two phases of this project involve:

- preparation of an amendment to the Victoria Planning Provisions and planning schemes by the Minister for Planning to enable the agreed vegetation management to be undertaken without a planning permit (completed by September 2011); and
- ongoing awareness raising and training where required for DSE (developing specialist skills) and road managers, including Council staff and VicRoads. This stage will occur following the introduction of the amendment and is closely related to the response to Recommendation 61.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 61 (roadside clearing and bushfire prevention activities) and Recommendation 62 (VicRoads bushfire risk assessment).

RECOMMENDATION 61

The State and Commonwealth provide for municipal councils adequate guidance on resolving the competing tensions arising from the legislation affecting roadside clearing and, where necessary, amend environment protection legislation to facilitate annual bushfire-prevention activities by the appropriate agencies.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

DSE will lead the project to implement this recommendation in consultation with CFA, MAV, DPCD and road managers including local councils and VicRoads.

This project has three phases:

- through consultation with the Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group and road managers, identify specific guidance needs and regulatory barriers to undertaking roadside vegetation management for bushfire protection. This work is being done as part of the response to Recommendation 60 and will be completed by July 2011;
- if amendment to legislation is not deemed necessary, DSE will prepare guidance material (planning practice note) for release with the new exemption (Recommendation 60) in September 2011; and
- where regulatory impediments are identified that cannot be resolved through the delivery of Recommendation 60 or guidance as noted above, the Government will consider legislative amendments. The final phase, if required, will be subject to Parliamentary timelines.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendations 41 (native vegetation removal) and 60 (roadside vegetation management program).

RECOMMENDATION 62

VicRoads implement a systematic statewide program of bushfire risk assessment for all roads for which it is responsible, to ensure conformity with the obligations in s. 43 of the

Country Fire Authority Act 1958 and with the objectives expressed in the VicRoads 1985 Code of Practice.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

VicRoads has:

- revised and released an Interim Fire Management Code of Practice in December 2010. The final version of the code will be completed following the release of the new VicRoads Roadside Management Strategy in mid 2011 and finalisation of the road fire risk assessment guidelines also in mid 2011;
- completed a review of its Roadside Management Strategy in January 2011;
- developed through a Working Group, including representatives from the CFA, MAV and DSE, draft road fire risk assessment guidelines;
- developed and delivered a program of priority roadside fire management activities for the 2010-11 fire season;
- reviewed and revised its standard (Section 752 Contract) specification for mowing and slashing grasses to determine the need for additional works to reduce bushfire risk, including dealing with shrubs and trees; and
- financially supported CFA requests for assistance with traffic management, in 2010-11, during the conduct of roadside fuel reduction burns on arterial roads.

The draft roadside bushfire risk assessment guidelines:

- provide an agreed process and methodology for assessing the fire risk posed by roadside vegetation;
- inform and contribute to decision-making on appropriate treatments; and
- will be trialled in two high fire risk areas (East Gippsland and the Dandenongs) during Autumn 2011.

VicRoads has been actively involved in all statewide regional Integrated Fire Management Planning processes and is providing input into other bushfire planning committees.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

VicRoads will complete the evaluation of the draft roadside bushfire risk assessment guidelines in July 2011 and commence the risk assessment program in August-September 2011 based on the final guidelines.

VicRoads has been allocated \$13m for the development of a strategic, co-ordinated roadside management framework and prioritised a program of works to reduce the bushfire risk imposed by roadside vegetation on Victoria's arterial road network. Elements of this package include:

- a series of initiatives to enhance VicRoads' role in bushfire preparation and prevention; including being an active member of regional Integrated Fire Management Planning processes as well as providing input into other bushfire planning committees such as those at the municipal level;
- the review of the Roadside Management Strategy (as detailed above) will result in a new strategy, which is currently being developed for release in mid-2011;
- undertaking roadside fire management priority treatments identified through the Integrated Fire Management Planning process;

- reviewing all VicRoads' roadside management plans including roadside conservation management plans on its 22,000km arterial road network to ensure its compliance with s 43 of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* and changes made to its Fire Management Code of Practice. This review will be completed by June 2013 with priority attention to be given to assessing and treating roads in high risk areas; and
- VicRoads supporting CFA requests for assistance with traffic management during the conduct of roadside fuel reduction burns on arterial roads.

WHAT OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THESE ACTIONS LINKED TO?

Final Report Recommendation 60-61 (roadside vegetation management program and bushfire prevention activities).

CHAPTER EIGHT - RELIEF AND RECOVERY

While the Commission did not make formal recommendations on relief and recovery measures, it did make a number of observations and comments relating to issues that warranted examination and action.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Coordination of medical services - DH and DHS updated the State Health Emergency Response Plan in December 2009. The revised version contains provisions for the activation of field primary care clinics in the relief phase of an emergency as well as improved coordination procedures for primary care/medical services across multiple agencies using a dedicated "health commander". The health commander will be involved in processes at the incident, regional and state level and will actively manage the timely activation of the State Health Emergency Response Plan when required.

Roadblocks – In response to the Commission's Interim Report (August 2009), Victoria Police revised its traffic management point guidelines, among other things, to ensure that recovery personnel can enter areas affected by an emergency and commence recovery operations as early as possible.

Recording lessons learned - The Commission suggested the Victorian Government should review the approach it took to reconstruction and recovery to determine future improvements. VBRRA has already initiated a Legacy Project to document the establishment, operation and eventual closure of the Authority. It will record the achievements of the Authority and its recovery partners, including projects and other activities that demonstrate best practice, and identify lessons learned during its period of operation and their implication for future disaster recovery arrangements.

The VBRRA Legacy Project focuses on reconstruction and recovery activities that have involved the Authority. In some cases, these activities have been led by other government or non-government agencies or by community groups. VBRRA is working with these agencies to evaluate their activities and record their lessons learned.

The project draws on program evaluation, stakeholder forums, external research and case studies, commissioned reports and interviews with current and former staff, other State and non-government organisations and subject experts.

The majority of background research and interviews have been completed and evaluation of some of the more significant projects and programs is either in progress or completed. Community and local government forums were held in latter half of 2010 and early 2011. VBRRA has commenced drafting of sections of the report relating to its activities.

The Legacy Project is due for completion before the scheduled closure of the Authority in June 2011. This Project will contribute to the review of Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* in 2011.

DH and DHS have commissioned independent reviews of key recovery programs including the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service and the psychosocial recovery strategy. In addition, internal reviews of the community service hubs and

bushfire housing response are all contributing to the development of key legacy documentation to be used in future emergencies.

Fire Recovery Unit - A new Fire Recovery Unit within Regional Development Victoria is being established. This will operate from 1 July 2011 after the wind down of VBRRA and will provide a clear point of contact in Government for fire affected individuals, communities and councils and work closely with other agencies leading bushfire recovery projects. The unit will monitor existing recovery and reconstruction programs and work closely with the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund to distribute funding set aside for the medium to long term community recovery.

Bushfire Community Support Program - The Program was launched on 2 February 2011. The \$2.7m program began in March 2011 and will run for 16 months, providing a combination of individual support and engagement with local communities to support longer term recovery needs.

The program includes:

- a new Bushfire Communities Support Helpline as a central point to provide personal support and information to people affected by the bushfires;
- Bushfire Community Support Workers to provide locally-based assistance; and
- funding to local organisations in the Hume region to expand drug, alcohol, family violence and men's counselling programs, improving access for those affected by the bushfires.
- The Bushfire Community Support Workers also support community engagement activities, working closely with other community recovery groups.

State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan - An updated State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan was published as Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* in October 2010 and included the following.

Post-fire Welfare Checks - Outreach programs that consider the post-emergency welfare of individuals and families have not traditionally been activated in the early stages of an emergency. An outreach program was activated in the recovery phase of the fires of early 2009. The use of outreach programs has been included as a possible option for use in both the relief and recovery stages of emergencies.

Coordination of emergency relief - DH and DHS published the Emergency Relief Handbook in October 2010. It provides detail on key emergency relief functions to ensure a more consistent approach when planning for, or responding to, an emergency. Key themes from the Handbook are included in Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*.

Special needs of children - DH and DHS completed a literature review on 'Understanding the Unique Needs of Children and Youth in Emergency Recovery'. Key issues from this review were incorporated in Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* in 2011.

Case Management - Key information on case management was included in the update to Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* as part of stage 1 of the review. DHS also commissioned an independent evaluation of the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service. The final report concluded that the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service has been successful with a high degree of client satisfaction. Relevant recommendations from the evaluation will be reflected in Part

4 of the EMMV to improve upon the guidelines being finalised for an “all hazards” approach to emergency case management.

Stage two of this updating process will be completed in 2011. It will clarify the roles of providers of recovery services as well as addressing the following issues raised by the Commission:

Relief Centre registration process – incorporate the use of a single registration form which allows the re-issuing of identification once the information has been collected. This form is being developed to address the privacy and standard format considerations identified by the Commission.

Non-insurance and under-insurance - VBRRA undertook a survey in August 2010 of households that lost their principal place of residence in the bushfires. The survey sought information on households' current living arrangements, rebuilding intentions and difficulties with rebuilding. The aim of the survey was to enable VBRRA to provide more targeted support to households still in need of assistance.

The survey asked households whether their level of insurance had contributed to the cost of rebuilding being a barrier to moving into permanent living arrangements. VBRRA released the survey results in November 2010 in its 21 Month Report. It also provided the results relating to the levels of insurance to the Insurance Council of Australia. This informed the Insurance Council of Australia about the extent to which non-insurance and under-insurance was contributing to financial hardship 18 months after the fires of early 2009.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Animal Relief: Livestock and Companion Animals - DPI has general responsibility for the welfare and relief of livestock and companion animals. It works with several other agencies, including industry associations and animal welfare organisations, to deliver resources and services for livestock and companion animal relief during an emergency.

The key focus of the Animal Relief function is to ensure that animal welfare needs are met. These needs include:

- identification and management of evacuated animals;
- identification and assessment of affected animals;
- animal treatment and/or euthanasia or salvage slaughter;
- disposal;
- emergency containment;
- coordination of donated fodder and other donated goods for animal care; and
- provision of stock water.

In most fire situations, DPI will establish its own operations relating to fire affected agricultural properties and domestic animals.

As many different agencies contribute to animal welfare services during larger emergencies, their activities, whether voluntarily or permanently staffed, may need to be coordinated to avoid conflict, improve resource use and address gaps in response and recovery efforts. Where active coordination becomes necessary, DPI will activate a specialist Animal Welfare Coordinator within its emergency response arrangements.

To facilitate effective coordination, DPI convenes the Victorian Animal Welfare Emergency Management Committee to ensure the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in animal relief, both government and non government organisations, are understood. The Committee has conducted a series of workshops and is reviewing the Victorian Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan. The review process will be completed in September 2011 and DPI will update its emergency management plans appropriately.

Animal Relief: Wildlife - DSE is responsible for the welfare and rehabilitation of wildlife. DSE has developed Protocols for Volunteers Involved in Wildlife Rescue Operations, which apply to native wildlife rescue operations during bushfires.

DSE's Protocols for Volunteers Involved in Wildlife Rescue Operations guide the working relationship between the CFA, DSE and independent wildlife volunteers undertaking wildlife rescue activities during bushfire events. There are two key roles that manage wildlife issues within the Incident Management Team: the Wildlife Welfare Officer, who plays a pivotal role in communicating and planning actions to resolve wildlife issues during a bushfire and the Wildlife Field Operations Coordinator, who is the on-ground contact point for wildlife rescue volunteers.

Native animals which require further rehabilitation after treatment at the Triage Area are moved to an independent wildlife shelter operator or wildlife foster carer for rehabilitation.

Fencing – DSE, in consultation with CFA, has amended the 'Repair of Fences Damaged by Bushfire and Fire Control Line Rehabilitation' policy to provide that Government meet half the costs of materials to replace or repair fencing between private land and all national parks, state parks and state forests, when that fencing is destroyed by bushfire. A copy of the policy is available on DSE's website, www.dse.vic.gov.au.

CHAPTER NINE – SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Chapter 9 of Volume 2 of the Commission's Final Report does not contain any recommendations. However, it contains some important ideas that pervade its Report and particularly informs its views on Bushfire Safety Policy (Chapter 1):

... responsibility for community safety during bushfires is shared by the State, municipal councils, individuals, household member and the broader community (and)

... each of these groups must accept increased responsibility for bushfire safety in the future and that many of those responsibilities must be shared.

The Government endorses this approach.

Victoria played a leading role in the development of COAG's recently released National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (February 2011). Taking into account and building on the Commission's "shared responsibility" findings, the new National Strategy recognises:

... a need for a new focus on shared responsibility; one where political leaders, governments, business and community leaders, and the not-for-profit sector all adopt increased or improved emergency management and advisory roles, and contribute to achieving integrated and coordinated disaster resilience. In turn, communities, individuals and households need to take greater responsibility for their own safety and act on information, advice and other cues provided before, after and during a disaster.

... achieving increased disaster resilience is not solely the domain of emergency management agencies; rather, it is a shared responsibility across the whole of society.

The pattern of growing complacency (as memories of devastating bushfires recede) is the enemy of building such resilience and, as the Commission observes, can place some people at the risk of death when bushfires occur.

The Government accepts the Commission's conclusion that "(s)ound preparation and effective responses on the part of the State, municipal councils, the community and individuals will collectively help to minimise harm" from future bushfires. The Commission suggests that the complacency cycle can only be broken through "sustained efforts to deliver frank education and community awareness campaigns".

COAG's new *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* extends this theme in advocating:

Building disaster resilience requires sustained behavioural change across the entire community. ... Achieving disaster resilience is dependent on focusing not only on existing arrangements and services, but also on how to encourage individuals and communities to be actively involved.

The Government acknowledges the need to encourage the community to move along the continuum from increased awareness to genuine engagement and on to active participation in its own safety and strengthened resilience.

CHAPTER TEN – ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

RECOMMENDATION 63

The State enact legislation designed to achieve two specific ends:

- 63.1 appoint a Fire Commissioner as an independent statutory officer responsible to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and as the senior operational firefighter in Victoria
- 63.2 make the Chief Fire Officer of the Department of Sustainability and Environment a statutory appointment.
- 63.3 The Fire Commissioner should have responsibility for the following:
 - promoting and directing reform aimed at increasing the operational capability, interoperability and resilience of Victoria's fire services
 - developing and building operational capacity to prepare for the days of highest bushfire risk and exercising control over level 3 fires as the permanent State Controller
 - providing to Government periodic advice on the metropolitan fire district boundary on the basis of triggers, frequency and criteria approved by Government
 - representing Victorian interests on operational matters in national committees.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Victorian Parliament enacted the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*. In summary, the Act:

- provides for the appointment, powers and functions of the Fire Services Commissioner;
- amends Victoria's emergency management arrangements so the Fire Services Commissioner is the State Controller of the response to major fires;
- requires the Commissioner to drive operational improvement within and between the fire services by setting performance standards, developing incident management operating procedures and formulating a reform action plan; and
- amended the *Forests Act 1958* to make the Chief Fire Officer of DSE a statutory appointment.

The Governor in Council appointed Craig Lapsley as Victoria's first Fire Services Commissioner in October 2010.

The Secretary of DSE appointed the Chief Fire Officer in accordance with the *Public Administration Act* and s61A of the *Forests Act* on 3 December 2010.

The Commissioner has:

- in conjunction with the fire services, developed and executed revised State Command and Control Arrangements for Bushfire in Victoria, which provide for clear and unambiguous command and control of, preparedness for, and response to bushfires, and detail roles, responsibilities and reporting arrangements at the state, regional and incident levels;
- reviewed State Control Centre standard operating procedures and made initial changes to processes and systems for the 2010–11 bushfire season to integrate the role of State Controller and the State Fire Control Team;

- issued strategic control priorities to guide controllers at the state, regional and incident levels, which focus on the primacy of life and issuing community information and warnings that are timely, relevant and tailored to assist community members to make informed decisions about their safety;
- delegated certain functions, powers and duties to the Chief Officers of CFA and MFB and the Chief Fire Officer and Secretary of DSE to ensure that they can continue to manage major fires and issue information and warnings under certain circumstances;
- commenced an audit and review of systems and processes for issuing information and warnings to determine how to best move towards single systems, processes and technologies that deliver more accurate information and warnings to communities more quickly to help people to make informed decisions;
- started a dialogue with the fire services about key priorities and challenges for the first three year rolling reform plan; and
- established an organisational structure and engaged a small team of specialists to support him in his role.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Fire Services Commissioner is leading or participating in the implementation of the Government's response to a number of the Commission's final recommendations. This responsibility is shown in relation to relevant recommendations throughout this Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 64

The State replace the Fire Services Levy with a property-based levy and introduce concessions for low-income earners.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Department of Treasury and Finance released a Green Paper *Fire Services and the Non-Insured* in October 2009 to encourage community debate and seek comment on different models for funding the MFB and CFA.

Submissions on the Green Paper were broadly supportive of a new property based fire services levy.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Government is committed to introducing a property based levy, and is currently considering a number of issues in relation to the design and timing of the new levy. As part of a comprehensive public consultation process on the proposed design and implementation of the new levy and transition arrangements, DTF will release a position paper in June 2011.

This paper will outline the proposed arrangements for key aspects of the new levy including its design and structure, and the most effective and efficient method to phase out the insurance based model and implement a property based model.

The Government intends to introduce legislation in early 2012. There will be a transition period commencing on 1 July 2012 to allow insurers to phase out the Fire Services Levy prior to full implementation from 1 July 2013.

CHAPTER ELEVEN – RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

RECOMMENDATION 65

The Commonwealth establish a national centre for bushfire research in collaboration with other Australian jurisdictions to support pure, applied and long-term research in the physical, biological and social sciences relevant to bushfires and to promote continuing research and scholarship in related disciplines.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

This recommendation is directed at the Commonwealth. However, the Victorian Government shares the Commission's view that "(c)ontinuing research into fire is fundamental to the advancement of bushfire management". This position is consistent with that expressed in the Council of Australian Government's recent *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*:

A disaster resilient nation harnesses knowledge and coordinates research efforts of institutions, industry and government. Aligning research outcomes with policy needs will be an important way of achieving this and will shape our future capabilities.

As one of the most bushfire-prone areas in the world, Victoria is a natural home for a new research centre that builds upon existing research partnerships.

A number of Victorian tertiary institutions have expressed a strong interest in hosting a new national research centre. There is already a significant amount of research into bushfires and other hazards undertaken in Victoria through universities and the Bushfire CRC and also government-led research through DSE, CFA and other agencies.

The Victorian Government considers that this existing research base and individual expertise, together with the deep history of bushfires in Victoria, make the State the ideal location for the new institute.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The Victorian Government has urged the Commonwealth to consider building on the existing expertise of Victorian-based higher education institutions as the basis for the new national research centre for the reasons outlined. The Commonwealth have recently referred responsibility for the progression of a national research centre, along with the concept of the Disaster Resilience Centre of Excellence (that COAG agreed to pursue on 13 February 2011), to the National Emergency Management Committee.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

Following liaison with relevant stakeholders and in consultation with DPC, the Bushfire CRC are refining a proposed model for an Australasian Fire Research Institute. Once finalised, the Bushfire CRC and DPC will progress this model with the Commonwealth in late 2011, via the National Emergency Management Committee.

CHAPTER TWELVE – MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATION 66

The State appoint an independent monitor or the Victorian Auditor-General to assess progress with implementing the Commission's recommendations and report to the Parliament and the people of Victoria by 31 July 2012.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

In November 2009, the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Neil Comrie AO APM, was appointed to review progress against the State's Implementation Plan in response to the Commission's Interim Report.

Mr Comrie provided his Delivery Report to the Commission on 31 March 2010. In summary, the report concluded:

- there was a strong commitment to implementation across Government;
- good progress had been made overall;
- the timelines for some projects were overly optimistic and much work remained to be done;
- the governance arrangements that the State had put in place were appropriate and effective; and
- given the benign 2009-10 summer, a number of the new systems and processes were yet to be "stress tested" by extreme events.

The Government introduced, and the Parliament has enacted, the *Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor Act 2011* in response to this recommendation. The Act puts the appointment, functions and reporting obligations of the Implementation Monitor on an independent statutory footing.

In addition, the Act requires the Minister for Bushfire Response to prepare and table an Implementation Plan in the Parliament on or before 31 May 2011. The Plan is required to specify the actions the Government has taken, is taking and will take in response to the Commission's Final Report and those recommendations from its Interim Reports that have not been fully implemented. This document constitutes the Government's response to that requirement.

The Governor in Council has appointed Mr Neil Comrie AO APM as the Implementation Monitor for this Plan. Under the Act, the Monitor is required to:

- monitor and review the progress of agencies in implementing this Implementation Plan;
- assess on-going efforts to improve the interaction of State agencies with Councils for the purpose of planning and preparation for bushfires; and
- table in the Parliament a progress and final report on his findings and conclusions on 31 July 2011 and 2012 respectively. These dates are the first and second anniversaries of the tabling of the Commission's Final Report.

REFLECTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 67

The State consider the development of legislation for the conduct of inquiries in Victoria - in particular, the conduct of royal commissions.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

The Premier has directed his Department to develop a policy proposal for a Public Inquiries Bill for the Government's consideration.

In developing this policy proposal, DPC will take into account:

- the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Implementing the *Uniform Evidence Act report 2006*, which made a similar recommendation to the Commission's;
- the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2010 Report on *Making Inquiries: A New Statutory Framework*, which should provide some useful policy analysis to assist in developing a proposed regime for Victoria; and
- the development of legislation to deliver on the Government's commitment to establish an independent broad-based anti-corruption commission in Victoria.

ATTACHMENT A: ACRONYMS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System
Bushfire CRC	Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre
CFA	Country Fire Authority
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEECD	Department of Education And Early Childhood Development
DH	Department of Health
DHS	Department of Human Services
DoJ	Department of Justice
DoT	Department of Transport
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DPCD	Department of Planning And Community Development
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DSE	Department of Sustainability And Environment
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
ESTA	Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority
ESV	Energy Safe Victoria
IFMP	Integrated Fire Management Planning
IMT	Incident Management Team
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MFB	Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OESC	Office of The Emergency Services Commissioner
OSOM	One Source One Message
SWER	Single-wire earth return
VBRRA	Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction And Recovery Authority
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Service

ATTACHMENT B: INTERIM REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table sets out the four recommendations the Commission directed to the State in its Interim Reports for which implementation has not yet been completed. It indicates the action to be taken to finalise the response to these interim recommendations. In three of these cases, that action is linked to the implementation of one of the Commission's final recommendations and the table points to where that action is located in this Implementation Plan.

NEW FIRE SEVERITY SCALE	
INTERIM REPORT 1 RECOMMENDATION 4.3 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE The State has commissioned research into the development of a new fire severity scale, which will aim to denote the risk posed by a "going" fire. This research will be completed by July 2010 in time to be considered for use before the 2010-11 fire season. The proposed scale will need to be linked to fire danger, expected fire behaviour and the potential for a fire to affect communities. This research will involve reviewing the February 2009 fires, past fire events, options for estimating the damage potential of fires and categorising future fires. The State has allocated \$150,000 for this project.	FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATION 1 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE (For full text see Page 17) Forecasting Potential Fire Risk - Australian Governments have agreed to conduct a research program to develop an improved basis for forecasting fire risk. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department is coordinating this research under the auspices of the National Emergency Management Committee. It will build on the fire severity research DSE led in response to the Commission's Interim Recommendation 4.3 and is expected to be completed by July 2013.
EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM	
INTERIM REPORT 1 RECOMMENDATION 4.8 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE Phase 2 of the NEWS project involves the investigation of the extension of the NEWS to send messages to mobile telephones on the basis of location. The State has released a Request For Information (RFI) from the market in relation to Phase 2 on behalf of all States and Territories. It closes on 28 October 2009. The aim of this exercise is to seek information on the technical feasibility of a location-based capability, rather than to procure that service. The Commonwealth has committed \$1.35m to identify a technical solution that will work across all carrier networks. The State, in conjunction with other Australian Governments, will evaluate responses to the RFI by December 2009. Any resultant proposal to extend the NEWS to deliver warnings to mobile telephones based on their location will be developed for consideration by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in early 2010.	FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATION 1 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE (For full text see Page 16) Emergency Alert Phase 2 – Following the completion of the feasibility study, the Commonwealth announced in September 2010 that it would fund the establishment costs for the second phase of the Emergency Alert project, which will enable warnings to be sent to mobile phones based on their physical location at the time of the emergency. The Commonwealth asked Victoria, through the OESC, to continue to lead the project on behalf of all States and Territories. Victoria is currently evaluating the "Location Based Solution" proposals submitted by all three telecommunications carriers. Significant work continues at State and Commonwealth levels to progress the Location Based Solution capability.

FIRE REFUGES POLICY	
INTERIM REPORT 1 RECOMMENDATION 8.4 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE The OESC will complete a discussion paper reviewing the current policy by 31 October 2009. The paper will include an audit of the number and maintenance of existing designated refuges. Work on a replacement policy and criteria has begun. In order to satisfy the need for a robust policy setting, this work will address a range of complex issues including research into the potential use of refuges by communities; the potential role of refuges as part of personal bushfire survival plans; the integration of refuges into other bushfire survival strategies; the application and development of appropriate building and construction Standards; the development of an appropriate siting assessment tool; what constitutes adequate physical protection; resourcing issues; and legal liability for the provision, maintenance and operation of refuges. In the interim, the development of the concept of NSPs will supplement existing bushfire survival strategies. It is expected that a replacement refuges policy will be completed by 30 June 2010.	FINAL REPORT RECOMMENDATION 4 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE (For full text see Page 30) The OESC reviewed the 2005 fire refuge policy including issuing a discussion paper for public comment. The Fire Services Commissioner has assumed responsibility for replacement of the fire refuges policy as part of the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework. However, a new policy cannot be finalised until there are direct construction standards for community fire refuges. The Government has requested the Australian Building Codes Board develop a national performance standard for community fire refuges by May 2012. In the interim, DPCD and the Building Commission have been funded to develop performance requirements for community fire refuges that Victoria could adopt ahead of any national standards and to contribute to the development of national standards. The Government plans to amend the Victorian Building Regulations 2006 by July 2011 to prescribe these performance requirements for use in Victoria and will release the revised fire refuge policy (including these performance requirements) at the same time. The Building Regulations (and fire refuges policy) will be further amended once the national standards are completed.
EMERGENCY CALL SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS	
INTERIM REPORT 1 RECOMMENDATION 12.3 EXCERPT FROM STATE RESPONSE The Australian Emergency Management Committee agreed (with Victoria's support) to the establishment of a Triple Zero Emergency Call Service (E000) Working Group. This group will consider a range of issues with the Triple Zero service with the aim of streamlining processes, reducing demand upon emergency service organisations' answering points and providing a better overall end-to-end service to the community.	This issue is not specifically addressed in the actions in response to the Commission's final report. However, the Working Party continues to meet to ensure ongoing improvements in the triple zero emergency call service. A key current focus is on improving the recorded voice announcements for Triple Zero in times of emergencies. Victoria is actively participating in this Working Group. Interrelated Victorian activities include: • DoJ assessing the viability of a non emergency number for Victoria Police with the aim of removing the non emergency demand on Triple Zero. • OESC and ESTA meeting regularly to examine potential service improvements.