

# Bushfire prevention and preparedness

Report 10 : 2014–15



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December 2014

The Honourable F Simpson MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Madam Speaker

**Report to Parliament**

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled *Bushfire prevention and preparedness* (Report 10: 2014–15).

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Greaves', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General



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# Summary

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## Background

While the scale of bushfire threat in Queensland is not as acute as that in the southern states, Queensland has already experienced several severe bushfires since the bushfire season started mid-winter 2014. The 2014 forecast predicts higher than normal risk of bushfires for much of south east Queensland. This raises the need for Queensland to anticipate and recognise this risk and to prepare accordingly and effectively.

To prepare successfully for bushfires, Queensland must have an effective bushfire management system which addresses prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). This system involves strategic processes to manage risk, including hazard identification, risk assessment and mitigation planning—this produces prepared and resilient households, communities and emergency services.

Fire seasons are lengthening. This sharpens the focus and community attention on the efforts and effectiveness of agencies in reducing bushfire threat to a manageable level.

Due to its technical capability and legislated authority, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) is the primary preparation and response agency for bushfires in Queensland. Managing Queensland's bushfire risk is a 'shared responsibility' that extends beyond government agencies to include individual landholders, communities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and private organisations.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC), the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 (the Malone Review) and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013 (the PACSR) identified improvements that could strengthen Queensland's bushfire preparedness. The reviews made a total of 287 recommendations, of which 168 related to bushfire safety, QFES and its organisational capability.

We focused on the recommendations relevant to Queensland's bushfire preparedness. We expected that QFES and the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) had adequately assessed and effectively implemented the recommendations; and, in doing so, that they had addressed the underlying issues raised in the three reviews.

## Conclusions

Queensland can respond to, prevent and prepare for bushfires better now than five years ago, due to those actions it has taken up from the three reviews.

But QFES needs to do more—it can respond more efficiently to bushfires by better coordinating activities and adopting preventative actions. While QFES has a clear mandate to prepare for the threat of bushfires in Queensland, it focuses primarily on responding to fires. QFES does not balance preparation and response appropriately.

QFES has demonstrated a slow cultural shift towards taking greater responsibility over mitigation activities. The absence of a central authority, coordinating and overseeing mitigation activities statewide, hampers the ability of QFES to respond to a bushfire event effectively and efficiently. This diminishes QFES's awareness of Queensland's bushfire preparedness and ultimately impairs the agency's ability to fulfil its role effectively under the State Disaster Management Plan.

Communities remain exposed to higher levels of risk than they need to be. Responsible agencies have not implemented all recommendations as or when they were intended to be, nor are they using the bushfire management system to its full potential. Additionally, QFES has limited awareness of communities' preparedness for bushfires.

## Key findings

### Mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk

While it has the legislative responsibility, QFES has limited visibility and oversight of the state's bushfire risks. As QFES's bushfire planning is response focused, their plans contain minimal information about bushfire prevention and preparedness. Mitigation plans become less useful in showing preparation and response are in balance.

Mitigating bushfire risk requires identifying bushfire hazards; and assessing their likelihood of eventuating and their potential to cause harm. This risk analysis informs mitigation programs, including targeted hazard reduction burns and community education programs.

QFES manages hazard identification and mitigation regionally; yet the seven QFES regions are not recording their vegetation fire hazard inspections or documenting their assessment of the bushfire hazard in detail. There is no central repository for regions to record any high risk, bushfire-prone areas they identify during regular inspections.

QFES chairs fire management groups (FMGs) which bring major land managers and other stakeholders together to help manage Queensland's fuel loads. While QFES collates the hazard reductions burns conducted on a regional basis, FMG members do not collect each other's fire management plan and do not capture each agency's planned hazard reduction burns. The FMG members also do not report back on the effectiveness of their burns. Under the existing arrangements, QFES is unaware if required hazard reduction burns occurred, whether they were effective—and if Queensland's fuel loads are being managed effectively.

### Preparing Queensland communities for the threat of bushfires

Local bushfire plans help communities understand their bushfire risk and provide them with emergency information to prepare for and respond to this threat effectively. Queensland supported, but did not implement, a specific VBRC recommendation that individual communities at risk of bushfire develop local plans. This is a significant omission by the interdepartmental committee tasked with overseeing Queensland's response to the VBRC recommendations. Local plans aid in reducing confusion and support residents to make better decisions when responding to the threat of a bushfire.

Flaws in the bushfire warning systems, such as issuing non-specific generic text message warnings, mean residents may receive inaccurate information about the predicted fire conditions and conflicting advice about the action to take before and during a bushfire. QFES partially mitigates this risk by using various means to warn communities of a bushfire threat, increasing the opportunity for residents to receiving accurate and timely advice.

Queensland has revised its bushfire safety policy and QFES has developed bushfire education materials to raise awareness of bushfire risk; however, QFES does not coordinate its educational activities well nor direct them to communities most at risk. The inability of QFES to target education and rising community awareness increases the risk of adverse safety outcomes and can hamper emergency responders in fulfilling their role effectively.



## Recommendations

It is recommended that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services:

1. **strengthens its oversight role as lead agency for mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk to acceptable levels by:**
  - **coordinating land managers' efforts to assess and mitigate bushfire risk**
  - **formalising the role of fire management groups to manage Queensland's fuel loads, including reporting planned and conducted hazard reduction burns and the effectiveness of hazard reduction burns**
  - **amending its bushfire mitigation planning to address prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and to manage Queensland's residual bushfire risk**
  - **developing and implementing a coordinated strategy to address arson, deterring would-be offenders and rehabilitating convicted offenders**
  - **working with local councils to develop and communicate local bushfire plans for communities located in high risk, bushfire-prone areas**
2. **improves engagement with communities to prepare for and respond to bushfires by:**
  - **increasing focus on monitoring the effects of educational materials it develops**
  - **reviewing and amending its bushfire warnings and alert protocols to provide clear and consistent messages to residents about the action to be taken before and during a bushfire.**

## Reference to agency comments

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to QFES and PSBA with a request for comments.

Their views have been considered in reaching our audit conclusions and are represented to the extent relevant and warranted in preparing this report.

The comments received are included in Appendix A of this report.



# 1 Context

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## 1.1 The effect of bushfires in Australia

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Australia experiences many large, devastating natural disasters, including catastrophic bushfires. Bushfires are one of the world's most dangerous natural phenomena, killing 552 Australians in the twentieth century and causing 200 more deaths from the year 2000.

On average, bushfires cause \$80–100 million of insurable damage each year in Australia. We spend a further \$1.2 billion each year to manage bushfires. This cost does not include the time and effort of 300 000 volunteer firefighters engaged across the country.

## 1.2 Queensland's bushfire threat

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The Bureau of Meteorology states:

*"...that a bushfire threat is typically associated with high temperatures, low humidity, strong winds and high fuel load. Bushfires become catastrophic when all these things occur in combination".*

Current research indicates bushfire seasons will lengthen in the coming decade and both fire frequency and intensity may increase throughout these longer seasons. Queensland's bushfire season typically extends from mid to late winter to early summer.

Queensland's bushfire threat is not as acute as in Australia's southern states. Queensland experiences its hottest weather during its wet season. Despite this, Queensland has still experienced several devastating bushfires that have resulted in loss of life and property:

- During the 1991 fire season, four people died and three homes were destroyed in several large fires that burned across the state.
- During the 1994 fire season, 682 major fires destroyed 23 houses across the state. Nine volunteer firefighters were injured and 3 000 people were evacuated from their homes.
- In the 2002 fire season, one person died, 10 homes were destroyed and over 1 000 people were evacuated when three major fires broke out near Stanthorpe, Toowoomba and Tara.

The increasing number of rural residential properties across the state further exacerbates the level of risk in Queensland. A number of homes threatened during the January 2014 North Stradbroke Island bushfire were either surrounded by or close to bush.

## 1.3 Responsibility for managing bushfire risk

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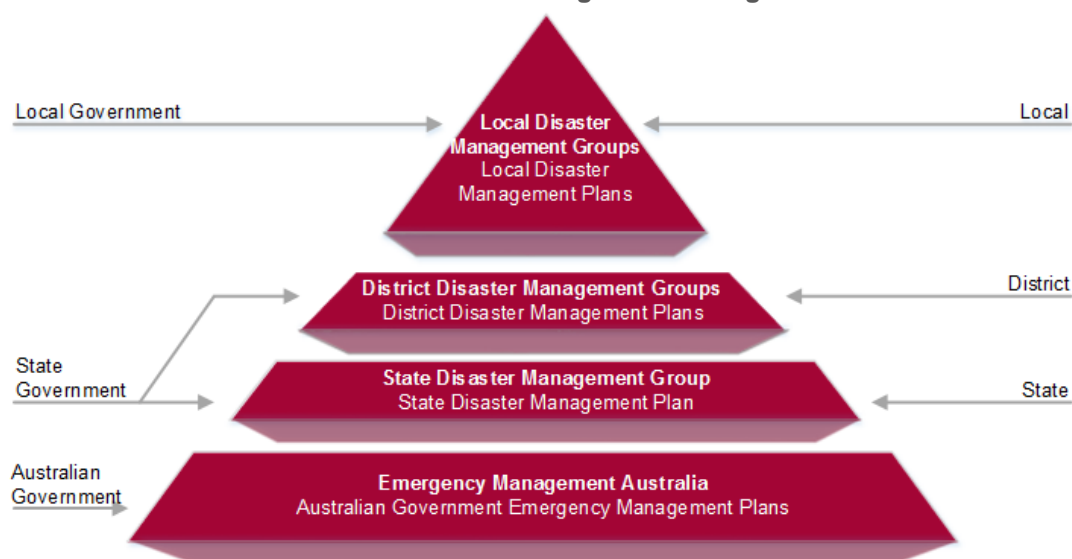
Queensland's disaster management arrangements require both local and state government agencies to manage disasters, including the threat of bushfires. Managing disasters in Queensland is a 'shared responsibility' that extends beyond government agencies to include individual landholders, communities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and private organisations.

Shared responsibilities across levels of government, private organisations, community groups and individuals must have mature coordination and leadership to be effective.

### 1.3.1 Queensland's disaster management arrangements

Queensland's disaster management arrangements operate at four levels: local, district, state and federal. Figure 1A illustrates these four levels.

Figure 1A  
Queensland disaster management arrangements



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Queensland's disaster management arrangements

Membership of disaster management groups includes local and state government agencies, state emergency response agencies and NGOs. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' (QFES) representatives are members of each of the disaster management groups.

At the local level, the *Disaster Management Act 2003* makes local governments primarily responsible, through their Local Disaster Management Groups, for managing disasters and carrying out disaster operations in their local areas.

District Disaster Management Groups and the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) are responsible for providing local governments with appropriate resources and support to help them carry out disaster operations.

Disaster management groups within each level plan, organise, coordinate and implement activities across the four phases of disaster management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR).

The SDMG may approach the Australian Government for additional support in disaster events. The Queensland Disaster Management Committee will replace the SDMG in November 2014 to allow direct ministerial participation in the strategic management of disaster events.

Each disaster management group is responsible for developing a disaster management plan that outlines potential hazards and risks, prevention and preparedness strategies and response and recovery arrangements.

### 1.3.2 Hazard specific plans for bushfires

The disaster management arrangements acknowledge there are specific hazards that require a 'primary agency' to prepare for and respond to the hazard, based on that agency's legislated authority (Appendix E of this report provides a complete list of hazard specific plans). During these events, disaster management groups coordinate resources to support the primary agency's operations.

QFES is the primary agency to manage the threat of bushfires in Queensland. Under the State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP), QFES is responsible for developing a hazard specific plan for bushfires that addresses the actions required across the four PPRR phases.

QFES has developed wildfire mitigation and readiness plans that aim to mitigate the risk of bushfires and prepare for the threat of bushfires across Queensland.

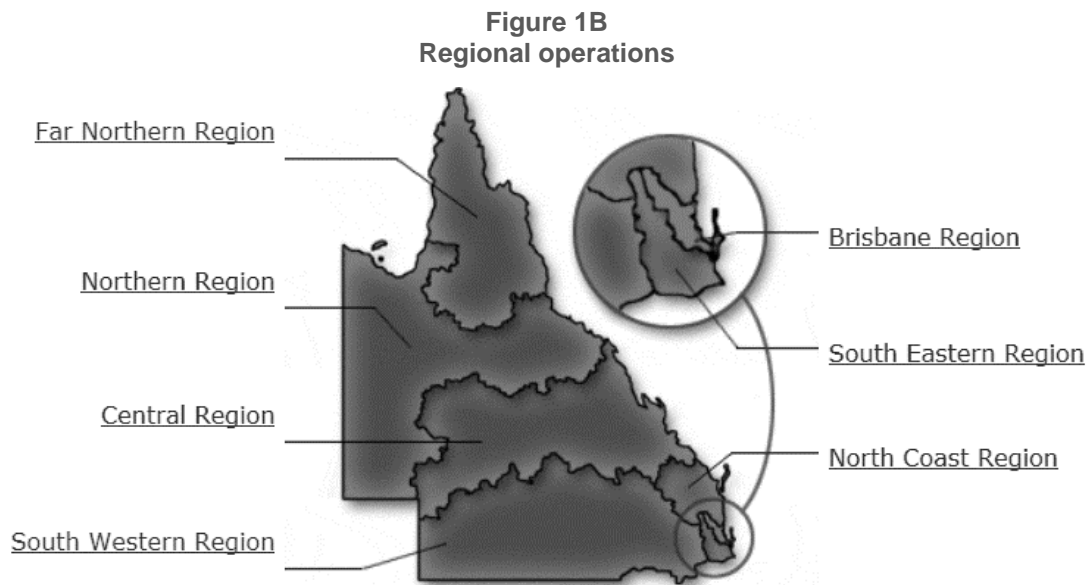
## 1.4 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

The *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* documents QFES' responsibility to prepare for and respond to bushfires and states QFES is required to provide an advisory service and undertake other measures to promote fire prevention and fire control.

QFES consists of three divisions:

- Operations and Emergency Management
- Emergency Services Volunteers
- Operations Capability and Performance.

QFES operations are divided into seven regions: South Eastern, Brisbane, North Coast, South Western, Central, Northern and Far Northern. Figure 1B shows the seven regions.



Source: QFES internal website

QFES has approximately 35 000 rural fire service volunteers, 6 000 state emergency service volunteers and more than 4 000 paid firefighters (permanent and auxiliary). It delivers services including firefighting, road crash and other technical rescues, emergency management, community education, chemical and hazardous material management, building safety services and other fire and emergency services.

## 1.5 Recent reviews

The Queensland Government has considered three major reviews that relate to bushfire prevention and preparedness since the 2009 Victorian bushfires:

- 2009—Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC)
- 2013—The Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland (the Malone Review)
- 2013—The Police and Community Safety Review (PACSR).

### 1.5.1 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

On 7 February 2009, Victoria experienced the worst bushfires in the nation's history, known as the 'Black Saturday' bushfires. The bushfires claimed 173 lives and destroyed 2 029 properties.

The VBRC was established to investigate the causes of and responses to the fires that burned across Victoria in late January and February 2009. The VBRC identified significant performance gaps in Victoria's bushfire management system and made a total of 67 recommendations. The recommendations covered:

- bushfire safety education
- emergency and incident management
- fireground response
- electricity-caused fires
- deliberately lit fires
- planning and building
- land and fuel management
- organisational structure
- research and evaluation
- monitoring and implementation.

### 1.5.2 The Malone Review

The Malone Review tabled its report on rural fire services in Queensland on 22 April 2013; its purpose was to investigate and provide options on the functions, structure, leadership and funding of the Queensland Rural Fire Service (RFS). The Malone Review made a total of 91 recommendations.

### 1.5.3 The Police and Community Safety Review

The PACSR commenced on 2 January 2013 and focused on factors that prevent efficiency, effectiveness and interoperability across the police and community safety portfolios. The PACSR released its report on 10 September 2013, comprising 129 recommendations and including an assessment of the Malone Review recommendations.

The government accepted all 129 recommendations. QFES is responsible for implementing 32 PACSR recommendations. The recommendations pertaining to QFES predominantly focus on the agency's structure, culture, services and employment arrangements.

## 1.6 Machinery of government changes

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QFES is currently undergoing significant organisational restructure, due to recent machinery of government changes. The Malone Review and the PACSR made 128 recommendations that related to QFES. QFES has implemented a substantial number of these recommendations before and during this period of transition.

Legislation established the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) on 6 May 2014 as a result of the PACSR. PSBA provides executive, corporate and business services to QFES, the Queensland Police Service and the Office of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management. The function that administered the interdepartmental committee that oversaw Queensland's response to the VBRC now resides in PSBA.

## 1.7 Audit objective, method and cost

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The objective of this audit was to determine if Queensland is better able to prevent and prepare for bushfires following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013.

The cost of the audit was \$366 000.

## 1.8 Report structure

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The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2—Queensland's response to the three reviews
- Chapter 3—Mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk
- Chapter 4—Preparing Queensland communities for the threat of bushfires
- Appendix A—Agency comments
- Appendix B—Audit approach
- Appendix C—Implementation status of VBRC recommendations
- Appendix D—Community Information Guide
- Appendix E—Hazard specific plans.





## 2 Queensland's response to the three reviews

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### In brief

#### Background

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC), the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 (the Malone Review) and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013 (the PACSR) identified performance gaps relevant to Queensland's bushfire preparedness.

The reviews made a total of 287 recommendations, 168 of which were relevant to bushfire safety, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and its organisational capability.

The Queensland Government established an interdepartmental committee (IDC) to respond to the VBRC and to implement solutions to recommendations the Queensland Government supported.

#### Conclusions

The IDC's lack of effective control and coordination in overseeing Queensland's response to the VBRC, and a failure of QFES and PSBA to step into the gap left by the cessation of the IDC, meant recommendations were poorly assessed for their applicability to Queensland and several lacked timely implementation and effectiveness in addressing the underlying issue.

#### Key findings

- The IDC:
  - did not document its analysis of the applicability for each recommendation; this led to incorrect assessment decisions about implementing recommendations
  - failed to establish time frames to implement VBRC recommendations, resulting in poor oversight and unnecessarily long lead times to implement solutions to recommendations
  - did not accurately monitor the status of implementing recommendations; this required remedial action for each incomplete recommendation.
- There was no process to review the effectiveness of implemented solutions in addressing the underlying concern.
- A multi-layered approval process is delaying implementation of the PACSR and Malone Review recommendations.

## 2.1 Background

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The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC), the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 (the Malone Review) and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013 (the PACSR) identified a range of performance gaps critical to Queensland's bushfire preparedness.

The reviews made a total of 287 recommendations: 168 of which related to bushfire safety, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and its organisational capability.

Successful implementation of recommendations required both QFES and the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) to have in place, or establish, effective and efficient governance arrangements. This would ensure recommendations were adequately assessed for their applicability and implementation was carefully planned, monitored and evaluated to ensure implemented solutions addressed the underlying issues.

We examined whether Queensland's response to the three reviews was adequate and the implementation status of recommendations.

We expected to find agencies had:

- assessed recommendations for their applicability to Queensland
- implemented relevant recommendations in a timely manner
- evaluated the solutions implemented for effectiveness.

## 2.2 Conclusions

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As a result of implementing 114 of the 168 recommendations Queensland is better prepared than in 2010 when the VBRC made its recommendations. Nonetheless, Queensland is not as prepared as it should be, or would be with better management of its response to the recommendations.

There was a lack of effective control and coordination by the interdepartmental committee (IDC) tasked with overseeing Queensland's response to the VBRC, and a failure of QFES and PSBA to step into the gap left when it ceased. This meant recommendations were poorly assessed for their applicability to Queensland, ineffective in addressing underlying issues and, in several instances, lacking in timely implementation.

Consequently, some recommendations the Queensland Government supported as relevant to the state and its bushfire preparedness have either not been implemented or not implemented effectively.

## 2.3 Reported status of recommendations

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As of October 2014, 114 (68 per cent) of 168 recommendations were reported as implemented and 54 (32 per cent) recommendations were in progress.

Figure 2A provides a summary as at 1 October 2014 of the implementation status of the relevant VBRC recommendations as reported by PSBA and relevant Malone and PACSR recommendations as reported by QFES.

**Figure 2A**  
**Reported status of recommendations by review**  
**as at 1 October 2014**

| Review | Report                           | In progress | Implemented | Total |
|--------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| VBRC   | PSBA implementation report       | 10          | 35          | 45    |
| Malone | QFES task closure audit register | 15          | 76          | 91    |
| PACSR  | QFES task closure audit register | 29          | 3           | 32    |
| Total  |                                  | 54          | 114         | 168   |

Source: QFES task closure audit register and PSBA implementation report

Figure 2B provides a summary of the implementation status of recommendations based on the type: bushfire prevention and preparedness, bushfire response and organisational policy, structure and capability.

**Figure 2B**  
**Reported status by recommendation type**  
**as at 1 October 2014**

| Recommendation category                         | In progress | Implemented | Total |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Bushfire prevention and preparedness            | 17          | 56          | 73    |
| Bushfire response                               | 2           | 5           | 7     |
| Organisational policy, structure and capability | 35          | 53          | 88    |
| Total   | 54          | 114         | 168   |

Source: QFES task closure audit register and PSBA implementation report

Of 54 recommendations in progress, 44 (83 per cent) are from the more recent Malone Review and PACSR. These relate to structural changes to QFES and will take time to implement.

## 2.4 Implementation of VBRC recommendations

In March 2010 the Queensland Government established an interdepartmental committee (IDC) to consider the VBRC findings and recommendations and to guide and oversee the development and implementation of Queensland's response.

The IDC's responsibilities included assessing recommendations for their applicability to Queensland and advising on the development of whole-of-government policy. The Assistant Director-General of the former Department of Community Safety chaired the IDC with membership from 12 state government departments.

In December 2010, the Queensland Government published its response to the VBRC findings and recommendations, including whether recommendations were 'supported, supported in principle, supported in part, not supported or not applicable'.

Of the 67 recommendations, the Queensland Government considered 22 recommendations to be 'not applicable' or 'not supported'. Appendix C in this report includes advice from the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) on the status of all 67 VBRC recommendations.

While the IDC established governance processes to guide and oversee the implementation of supported recommendations, it failed to establish implementation time frames, to monitor the implementation status accurately or to ensure feedback was effectively incorporated.

The IDC stopped meeting in December 2011 and did not provide a final report to government. PSBA was unable to explain the cessation of the IDC; it was not formally dissolved and did not plan how the outstanding recommendations would be implemented. The working document used to track the implementation progress was updated to August 2012 and recorded 27 VBRC recommendations as yet to be implemented. PSBA started reviewing the implementation status of these recommendations after this audit commenced.

The IDC left incomplete acquittal documentation which made it difficult for PSBA to ascertain if recommendations supported by the government were implemented. Electricity distributors analysed eight recommendations related to electricity-caused fires when the government required further analysis in response to the VBRC report; however, the IDC did not review the work nor was it presented to government to make an informed decision.

The IDC terms of reference did not include an implementation review function; neither the PSBA nor QFES has evaluated any of the implemented solutions to ensure they address the underlying concern effectively.

## 2.5 Implementation of Malone Review and PACSR recommendations

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QFES has implemented 64 per cent of the PACSR recommendations (which include the PACSR endorsed Malone Review recommendations) and is continuing the implementation process against an agreed schedule. All recommendations are scheduled to be implemented by 30 June 2015.

Implementation plans to address recommendations are subject to additional oversight which is contributing to delays. The approval process involves six different layers of review, encompassing four different committees which include the QFES transition steering committee, the Malone Review working group, PACSR implementation steering committee and a committee involving multiple departments. Although each committee has a different focus, the additional levels of scrutiny are impeding QFES in implementing timely solutions.

Neither QFES nor any external body has reviewed the implemented solutions to confirm they address underlying concerns. QFES has drafted an evaluation strategy to review the effectiveness of implemented recommendations; no timelines have been set to commence or finalise the review.

## 3 Mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk

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### In brief

#### Background

Mitigating bushfire risk requires developing and implementing a bushfire management system that addresses prevention and preparedness and incorporates a strategic process to manage risk.

The land manager is responsible for mitigating the fuel loads on their property, QFES has a regulatory role to ensure this occurs.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has developed and implemented strategies that aim to mitigate the threat of bushfires in Queensland, including bushfire mitigation plans and policy, mapping systems and fuel management practices.

#### Conclusions

Queensland is not as prepared for the threat of bushfires as it could be because QFES remains response focused, to the detriment of coordinating effective mitigation programs.

QFES has demonstrated a slow cultural shift towards taking greater responsibility over mitigation activities. Without a central authority coordinating and overseeing mitigation activities statewide, QFES' ability to respond to a bushfire event effectively and efficiently is hampered.

#### Key findings

- Queensland's bushfire management system and planning arrangements are fragmented, inadequate and do not measure the effectiveness of mitigation activities.
- QFES bushfire mitigation planning is response focused and does not address the actions required across prevention, preparedness and recovery.
- There is no clear link between the local, regional and state QFES bushfire mitigation plans.
- QFES does not record vegetation hazard inspections or its assessment of the bushfire hazard.
- Existing arrangements to manage Queensland's fuel loads are inadequate and do not capture each agency's planned and conducted hazard reduction burns, or the risk remaining after burns are conducted.
- Mitigation activities are not regularly reviewed for effectiveness. This prevents QFES from refining and improving mitigation strategies and its prevention messages to the community.

## 3.1 Background

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Risk management principles underpin the approach by emergency management agencies in Australia to reduce the threat of bushfires.

Firstly, agencies assess the level of risk by determining the likelihood and potential effects of bushfires. Based on these assessments, agencies develop and implement strategies to reduce the risk to acceptable levels. Finally, agencies evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies to provide assurance that an acceptable level of risk has been achieved.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) has developed and implemented strategies that aim to reduce the threat and effects of bushfires in Queensland, including bushfire mitigation plans and policy, mapping systems and fuel management practices. The responsibility to reduce fuel loads rests with the land manager. QFES's approach to its regulatory role is to collaborate, enable and support land managers in mitigating the risk of bushfires.

This chapter examines the effectiveness of these plans, systems and practices against the performance gaps the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC) identified that are also critical to moderating the risk of bushfires in Queensland: hazard identification, mitigation planning and fuel management.

## 3.2 Conclusions

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QFES is not focused on, nor effectively performing the full scope of its legislative mandate, particularly its role of preparing for the threat of bushfires. This is largely because the staff and culture of the organisation is overly response focused. QFES is not as effective as it could be in managing a coordinated whole of government risk profile, plans and mitigation strategies.

As a result, the state's ability to manage its bushfire risk—and potentially prevent some bushfires from occurring—is unnecessarily limited.

## 3.3 Hazard identification

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Hazard identification requires QFES to assess the likely intensity and speed of a bushfire. It involves assessing the slope of the land and vegetation types, including its condition, as well as natural firebreaks and access for personnel to fight a fire.

QFES is in the process of implementing recommendations 36 and 40 of the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 (the Malone Review) which relate to hazard identification.

**Malone recommendation 36:** *That to assist the Rural Fire Service Queensland and other agencies in managing wildfire risk, a planning system for wildfire management be established in legislation that complements the existing disaster management arrangements.*

**Malone recommendation 40:** *That annual planning be undertaken at each level that addresses hazard actions across all disaster management phases (PPRR), with a focus on vegetation and land management. This planning is to be consistent with the hazard-specific planning envisaged under the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements and be supported by guidelines to be developed and issued by Rural Fire Service Queensland. District plans are to be approved by the Deputy Chief Officer of RFSQ who will then draft a State Wildfire Management Plan to be approved by the State Disaster Management Group.*

Before and after the Malone Review, both the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* and the State Disaster Management Plan document QFES' responsibility to prepare for bushfires, including hazard identification and mitigation planning.

QFES has limited statewide visibility over identifying and capturing bushfire risk and reducing risk to an acceptable level.

### 3.3.1 Identifying bushfire risks

QFES uses Total Operational Mapping (TOM) to map bushfire hazards. TOM is an established system that has been in place for many years. It is designed to assist with situational awareness and is used to plan mitigation and response activities during a disaster, including bushfires.

QFES cannot use this system to identify current fuel loads accurately and prioritise hazard reductions burns accordingly. Instead, QFES primarily relies on local knowledge.

Despite being a matured system, QFES does not have a structured or consistent process to use and update TOM. Regions have the discretion to choose how and when they will use it to map bushfire risk in their area and this increases the reliance on local knowledge and fluid interpersonal communication channels.

The system allows users to apply multiple data layers to help visualise bushfire-prone areas; however, recent land management practices (for example grazing or weed mitigation), seasonal variation and fire history are not reflected in the potential fuel load. This reduces the ability to rely on data and means fuel reduction planning is not as informed as it could be; this may increase bushfire risk.

### 3.3.2 Assessing bushfire risk

QFES has established business rules to identify and manage bushfire risk throughout Queensland. Regions are responsible for conducting regular inspections of vegetation fire hazards during the year and documenting the risk within their areas.

QFES is unable to demonstrate that regular vegetation inspections are occurring and the results are being incorporated into hazard reduction plans or mapping systems.

QFES is not able to capitalise on local knowledge gained in assessing the condition of vegetation as the data generated from regional inspections are not consistently captured. Regions do not record in a central repository the high risk bushfire-prone areas they identify during regular inspections or using the TOM system. PSBA is developing a bushfire risk register which will help identify and document bushfire-prone areas across the state.

## 3.4 Bushfire mitigation planning

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A sufficiently detailed and widespread hazard identification program allows for tailored bushfire mitigation plans for communities. Mitigation planning focuses on reducing the level of risk identified during vegetation inspections. Bushfire mitigation planning targets areas at an elevated risk of a bushfire.

Malone Review recommendations 36 and 40 also pertain to bushfire mitigation planning.

### 3.4.1 Wildfire mitigation readiness plans

Under the State Disaster Management Plan, QFES is responsible for developing a hazard-specific action plan for bushfires that addresses all phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). The plans QFES generates are not achieving this requirement; this reduces the capacity of QFES to mitigate the threat of bushfires in a systematic and coordinated manner.

QFES has developed plans that aim to mitigate the threat of bushfires; at the forefront are the internal wildfire mitigation readiness plans each region develops and maintains.



None of the seven regional wildfire mitigation readiness plans addresses PPRR as the State Disaster Management Plan requires. Of the seven regions, five title their plans 'wildfire operational plans' and all plans focus on response—listing incident classifications, alert levels, resources and information about strike teams and incident control centres.

These plans contain minimal information about bushfire prevention and preparedness and no information about recovery. Only the North Coast region has documented, within the appendix of its plan, a list of high risk bushfire-prone locations, analysed the risk and developed mitigation strategies.

### 3.4.2 Operation Cool Burn hazard mitigation plans

QFES has developed statewide hazard mitigation plans. Hazard mitigation plans differ from the wildfire readiness plans in that they focus on prevention and preparedness and not all phases of PPRR. Hazard mitigation plans should be a subset of wildfire mitigation readiness plans and provide assurance that Queensland's bushfire risk is being reduced; they have not been developed in this manner and provide limited assurance Queensland's bushfire risk is being reduced

Introduced in 2013, 'Operation Cool Burn' is a hazard mitigation strategy focused on reducing bushfire risk and effects on the community. It is implemented through controlled hazard reduction burns and community engagement activities. Operation Cool Burn requires regions to document, within their hazard mitigation plans, the locations of bushfire-prone areas, a description of the hazard, a mitigation priority rating and strategies to reduce the level of risk in those locations.

QFES regions are not consistently:

- providing a detailed description of the bushfire hazard (vegetation type and density, terrain, fire behaviour, population) to head office
- stipulating time frames for all mitigation activities to occur
- providing regular status reports on the outcome of their mitigation activities
- capturing the risk remaining after hazard reduction activities.

The lack of a complete picture impedes QFES from identifying and addressing statewide bushfire risk in a timely and efficient manner and increases reliance on regions to self-manage.

### 3.4.3 Local action plans

Local action plans form part of the QFES risk planning framework. Local action plans are designed to identify key risk locations (including street by street) and document appropriate mitigation and response strategies.

QFES primarily uses local action plans as an operational tool for rapid and appropriate response to incidents. In practice, its use for mitigation planning is limited, due to the design and information captured on the plan. Pre-incident planning is the last dot point; one local action plan only provided a high level statement on council's responsibility to maintain firebreaks and QFES to continuing community education. Nonetheless, local action plans are particularly valuable to fire fighters and other emergency service personnel unfamiliar with the local area when responding to an incident.

During the audit, QFES could only provide data on the number of local action plans in Brisbane, South East, North Coast and Central regions. Only 23 per cent of bushfire-prone locations in these regions have a local action plan. The limited number of local action plans in high risk areas can reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of mitigation activities and delay the response to fire events, increasing the risk of damage to property.



## 3.5 Hazard reduction

Hazard reduction, such as fuel management, is a key component of an effective bushfire management system and is an important tool to reduce bushfire risk. Hazard reduction burns can reduce the speed, severity and potential effects of a bushfire by managing the amount of fuel on a property. A primary shortfall of bushfire management nationally has been failure to undertake an adequate number of hazard reduction burns in the most appropriate locations. This has led to excessive fuel loads accumulating, increasing fire intensity.

The VBRC (recommendation 56) and the Malone Review (recommendation 50) made recommendations on fuel management:

**VBRC recommendation 56:** *The State fund and commit to implementing a long-term program of prescribed burning based on an annual rolling target of 5 percent minimum of public land.*

**Malone recommendation 50:** *That the extent of forest and plantation fuel load fire risk in South East Queensland requires a designated government resources fire team to manage this risk and proactively conduct fuel mitigation burning; and provide a wildfire response to government land.*

The Queensland Government supported both recommendations. The interdepartmental committee determined existing arrangements covered VBRC recommendation 56 because Queensland had established a long term rolling program of planned burning. The former Department of Environment and Resource Management were using the annual target of five per cent for managing fuel loads on its managed estates.

While its successor, the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing continues to meet the five per cent target, it incorporates wildfire into the area of land burned. By its nature, wildfire is unplanned in location and hectares burnt.

It is unclear if Queensland is managing its fuel loads effectively across the state. Under the existing arrangements, QFES does not take responsibility for statewide fuel management and does not oversee Queensland's current fuel loads, nor is it aware if private and state government land owners are undertaking the required hazard reduction burns.

### 3.5.1 Responsibility for fuel management

Despite QFES having the legislative responsibility for hazard identification and mitigation planning, Queensland, unlike Victoria, does not have an agency responsible for managing fuel loads across the state. This results in a lack of oversight over statewide fuel load levels. The land manager is responsible for fuel loads on their property, but QFES cannot demonstrate that land managers fulfil this obligation.

The Malone Review identified this issue and recommended giving a designated government resource responsibility for managing the forest and plantation fuel load fire risk in south-east Queensland. The PACSR did not support this recommendation as individual land owners were already responsible for managing the fuel loads on their properties.

Under section 69 of the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990*, QFES has authority to issue notices requiring any occupier of a premises to reduce the fuel load on his or her property. QFES has rarely used this authority. In the last three years, QFES has issued 12 notices to private land occupiers; QFES did not conduct follow up inspections to determine if the fuel load on these properties had been addressed. QFES has never issued a notification to a state or local government land owner.

QFES informally asks private land occupiers with excessive fuel loads to reduce the risk on their properties but does not record the risk level, number of requests it makes or the outcome.

Due to the fragmented nature of recording and collating hazard identification risk levels, QFES is unable to determine if the low number of notices are due to good land management practices, effective informal liaison with land holders or a lack of oversight over fuel loads.

### 3.5.2 Fire management groups

QFES has established fire management groups to help manage Queensland fuel loads and to encourage a coordinated approach to bushfire management. These groups are responsible for identifying and reducing local vegetation hazards and developing plans for hazard reduction burns.

Fire management groups are not operating effectively to reduce and manage the state's fuel loads.

There are insufficient planning processes to ensure required hazard reduction burns are occurring. At a regional level, QFES collates each agency's conducted burns. However, fire management groups do not collect each member's fire management plan. Existing planning arrangements do not capture each agency's planned and conducted hazard reduction burns or the level of risk remaining. There is no process to review the effectiveness of each member's fire management plan.

QFES identified this gap in early 2014 and is developing a unified approach to formalise fire management groups in 2014–15.

Fire management groups include representatives from major land holders across all levels of government, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

## 4 Preparing Queensland communities for the threat of bushfires

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### In brief

#### Background

The effects of disasters, including bushfires, can be significantly reduced if communities are prepared and resilient.

Queensland has revised its bushfire safety policy to align with the national *Prepare. Act. Survive.* policy. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) uses a variety of mediums to inform Queensland communities of their risk level and to help individuals prepare for the threat of bushfires.

#### Conclusions

Communities in high risk bushfire-prone locations remain exposed to a higher level of risk than they should be. The inability of QFES to target effective educational activities efficiently means QFES is unaware if community members are prepared for bushfires.

#### Key findings

- Individual communities in bushfire-prone areas do not have a local bushfire plan to identify their risk, highlight neighbourhood safer places, promote emergency contact numbers and provide other information critical in a bushfire event.
- The current QFES bushfire warning messaging for Emergency Alert is inconsistent and does not inform residents of the most appropriate action to take during a bushfire.
- QFES cannot provide assurance that fire danger rating signs across Queensland are displaying the correct fire danger rating and informing communities of the current level of risk.
- QFES has not developed or implemented evaluation systems to review the effectiveness of its bushfire education programs. QFES is unable to demonstrate communities are receiving and understanding the programs.
- Queensland does not have a complete picture of the level of arson contributing to bushfires and has ceased education and rehabilitation programs.

## 4.1 Background

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Raising community awareness about bushfire risk is an important strategy to improve community preparedness and safety. In preparing communities for the threat of bushfires, emergency services must develop an effective bushfire safety policy; provide accurate and timely bushfire warnings and advice; and supply residents with the tools they require to prepare and respond effectively to the threat of bushfires.

This chapter examines the effectiveness of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' (QFES) policies, systems and practices against performance gaps identified by the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (the VBRC) and which are critical to the bushfire preparedness of Queensland communities. The areas covered are bushfire safety policy, local bushfire plans, bushfire safety education, school curricula and arson prevention.

## 4.2 Conclusions

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Communities in high risk bushfire-prone locations remain exposed to a higher level of risk than they should be, due to a lack of tailored localised advice and support and the potential to receive inconsistent messages.

As QFES has a limited understanding of the effectiveness of its communication strategies, it cannot efficiently target at risk communities and refine or modify programs to receive maximum effect.

## 4.3 Bushfire safety policy

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An effective bushfire safety policy is critical for both individuals and fire agencies preparing for and responding to bushfires. It is essential for coordinating key agencies, communities and individuals to ensure everyone is working to the same plan and knows what is expected. It should provide consistency in messaging, detail expected actions in response to events and outline the limitations of emergency services during fire events. VBRC recommendation 1 relates to bushfire safety policy:

*The State revise its bushfire safety policy, adopt the national Prepare. Act. Survive framework and 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 (refer to appendix C for complete recommendation).*

Queensland has implemented VBRC recommendation 1 and the government has revised its bushfire safety policy to incorporate the national *Prepare. Act. Survive.* framework.

The fire danger rating, combined with the time of impact, triggers the level of message emergency services issue to the community.

There are three levels of community warnings which emergency services provide to residents before, during and after a bushfire:

- Advice
- Watch and Act
- Emergency Warnings.

Advice warnings provide general information about a fire. Watch and Act warnings advise of a heightened level of danger and warn members of the public to prepare themselves. Emergency Warnings advise people they are in danger and need to take action immediately.

Warnings must be disseminated using a variety of channels to ensure maximum reach and to allow for any system failures. QFES uses different means, such as radio, television and their website, to communicate bushfire advice to Queensland communities, including the predicted passage of the fire, severity of the fire and the recommended action to take.

### 4.3.1 Emergency Alert

Emergency Alert is the national telephone warning system which sends voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones within a defined area about likely or actual emergencies. Emergency Alert is one of the tools QFES intends to use to disseminate warnings for bushfires; it has not yet been used for this purpose but has been used for floods, storms and cyclones.

QFES has developed Emergency Alert messaging templates to be used for its bushfire warnings. The templates contain inconsistent messaging content and the process for issuing messages does not accommodate errors such as failing to provide sufficient information. There is the potential that residents in the same community and under the same threat could act differently, depending on whether they receive a text warning or voice warning. This could lead to confusion, more complicated responses and poor outcomes.

Based on the current templates, if a fire is less than two hours away, a text message advises residents to 'seek shelter now'. If the fire is four to six hours away, a text message advises residents to 'relocate to a safer area'. Text messaging aligns with sample messaging documented in the national framework and provides information on the action to take.

Residents who receive a voice message are given the option to 'seek shelter or leave now if able to', leaving the resident to decide the most appropriate course of action. The type of fire and its time of impact does not influence the voice message. Voice messaging does not inform the resident of the most appropriate course of action to take, based on the fire and its time of impact. In an extreme or catastrophic bushfire, this may result in conflicting advice that is life threatening.

There is potential for delays in the Emergency Alert system between request initiation and message dissemination. Emergency Alert requests with insufficient information are returned to the Incident Controller with a request for additional information. The current QFES Emergency Alert flow chart does not plan for requests that may contain insufficient information and the delays this causes. A recent major simulation exercise demonstrated this gap when a Public Information Officer failed to provide a map with the request form, resulting in a 45-minute delay before an alert was sent. The ability to issue a timely and comprehensive warning is key to an effective warning system.

### 4.3.2 Early Warning System

QFES uses an Early Warning System to warn residents located at Mt Nebo and Mt Glorious of a bushfire threat. The Early Warning System is designed to warn residents of a bushfire threat using alert sirens, electronic roadside signs and information systems which include text messages, email and a community number. QFES tests and activates the Early Warning System, which the Moreton Bay Regional Council owns.

Test records for the Early Warning System located at Mt Glorious revealed residents in certain locations cannot hear the siren and other residents can only hear the siren faintly. While this limits the effectiveness of the system to warn residents of a bushfire threat, the alert sirens are one part of the Early Warning System. Residents may still receive a bushfire warning through other aspects of the Early Warning System, such as roadside warning signs or another medium. Moreton Bay Regional Council is reviewing the system and considering options to improve its effectiveness.

QFES has responsibility under a memorandum of understanding with Moreton Bay Regional Council to test the Early Warning System monthly. QFES did not test all phases of the Early Warning System in Mt Nebo on four scheduled occasions from January to July 2014 nor on three scheduled occasions in Mt Glorious from January to July 2014 because a brigade member was not available. Failure to regularly inspect and test the Early Warning System increases the risk of malfunction during a time of need.

### 4.3.3 Fire danger rating signs

Fire danger rating signs are located on selected roadsides. They publicly display the predicted fire severity for each day, based on weather and environmental conditions. QFES receives from the Bureau of Meteorology the forecast fire danger rating, which includes air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and drought levels.

QFES is unable to demonstrate that fire danger rating signs are accurate.

The current QFES procedures state that the signs will be updated manually before 0900 daily to reflect the current fire danger rating. The accuracy of each sign, therefore, rests with the diligence of a responsible officer or brigade member. QFES does not have a system in place to record if the signs have been updated. Inaccurate signs reduce the public's level of trust in the message and could lead to complacency if the appropriate level of warning is not displayed.

QFES has not recently assessed, and does not know, how familiar members of the public are with the fire danger rating and the message for each rating, i.e. a 'catastrophic' rating means leaving is the only option for survival. QFES last surveyed communities in August 2010 to assess the effectiveness of the *Prepare. Act Survive.* campaign. Of respondents surveyed, 73 per cent were unaware emergency agencies had implemented a new fire danger rating and national bushfire warning system.

## 4.4 Local bushfire plans

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Developing an effective bushfire plan is critical to the preparedness and resilience of a household and a community. QFES and local councils use a range of mediums to inform and encourage individuals to develop their own bushfire survival plans. While important, this encouragement does not provide a household with an understanding of its bushfire risk, nor does it provide the household with critical fire and emergency information. QFES has limited mechanisms to drive education and awareness strategies. Community surveys are not developed to capture whether residents have documented a bushfire plan and understand and have subscribed to early warning messages. VBRC recommendation 3 sought to improve the quality of information available to individuals:

*The state establish mechanisms for helping municipal councils to undertake local planning that tailors bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities (refer to appendix C for complete recommendation).*

Queensland supported, but did not implement VBRC recommendation 3. The Queensland Government assessed that local disaster management plans, developed and implemented by local councils, addressed the recommendation.

This was an incorrect assessment as local disaster management plans are not easily accessible nor readily available to communities and individuals. They cover 'all hazards' in the entire council area—not specific communities within a council's borders that face bushfire risk.

Local disaster management plans do not tailor bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities at risk of bushfire, nor do they identify for these communities specific evacuation and shelter options, a list of neighbourhood safer places, bushfire warnings (Advice, Watch and Act, Emergency Warnings) or critical information about *Prepare. Act Survive.*

In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Government developed Community Information Guides (reproduced in Appendix D of this report) for communities at risk of bushfire or grassfire. These guides are tailored to the local area and document the level of bushfire risk, local emergency contact details, bushfire warnings and advice, a bushfire threat map, evacuation options and other key bushfire preparedness information for the community. The guides help residents identify their fire risk and develop their own bushfire survival plan. Individual communities located in high risk, bushfire-prone areas in Queensland do not have a local bushfire plan and are less prepared for the threat of bushfires than they could be. This may result in confusion and incorrect decision making during a bushfire that is life threatening.

#### 4.4.1 Vulnerable populations

As part of the implementation plan for VBRC recommendation 3, the Queensland interdepartmental committee (IDC) planned to update local disaster management plans by including a list of organisations servicing vulnerable residents and the contact details for each organisation. The plans were not updated with these details.

Maintaining active and accurate lists of vulnerable residents and their service providers continues to be a challenge for all stakeholders involved in emergency services. Local councils, state agencies and non-government organisations have established various arrangements to support vulnerable residents during a disaster; these arrangements lack coordination. The existing arrangements are limited in effective planning for the needs of vulnerable residents, which may jeopardise residents' safety during a bushfire.

### 4.5 Bushfire safety education

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An effective bushfire education program helps communities understand their bushfire risk and provides them with the knowledge to prepare for and respond to bushfires. VBRC recommendation 2 addressed education:

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

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

Queensland has implemented VBRC recommendation 2. The government revised its approach to bushfire education to align with the national *Prepare. Act. Survive.* framework. QFES engages Queensland communities through a range of flexible education activities and provides the public with opportunity to request a community education presentation. Nonetheless, QFES cannot demonstrate the effectiveness of its education and engagement activities.

QFES uses an operational management system to record the bushfire education activities it undertakes. This reported 1 581 community bushfire education activities were delivered in 2013–14. Voluntary community educators deliver a significant numbers of educational activities that are not reported.



One of the major limitations with the operational management system is that it does not accurately capture the types of training, numbers of participants and locations of proposed or completed bushfire education activities across the state. Regions find it difficult to identify accurately the high risk, bushfire-prone locations that received bushfire education and use the system to apply a targeted approach to their community education activities.

Regional hazard mitigation plans demonstrate a significant gap in the number of high risk, bushfire-prone locations across the state that have received bushfire education. Regional hazard mitigation plans document planned bushfire education activities, but do not accurately capture delivered activities.

QFES has not developed or implemented evaluation systems to review the effectiveness of its bushfire education, including capturing feedback from participants. Based on these practices, the agency is unable to identify performance gaps and continuously improve its bushfire education.

## 4.6 School curricula

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The VBRC highlighted teaching schoolchildren about fire is fundamental to improving community bushfire safety. The VBRC noted that, in most Australian schools, a fire education curriculum remained an optional inclusion. VBRC recommendation 6 related to school curriculum:

*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.*

The Victorian Government progressed this recommendation with the Australian Government which amended the national curriculum in May 2012.

The Queensland Government has partially implemented VBRC recommendation 6. Under the existing arrangements, there is limited assurance that Queensland school children living in high risk, bushfire-prone areas are being taught the knowledge and skills to prepare for and respond effectively to bushfires.

The IDC failed to plan the implementation of the revised national curriculum in Queensland schools. This contributed to Queensland's Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) and QFES replicating each other's efforts in developing educational materials for schools. QFES and DETE did not collaborate in the development of their school-based bushfire education resources.

DETE has developed new geography 'Curriculum to Classroom' resources on bushfire education, primarily aimed at year five, and has made these available to schools from the beginning of 2014. Queensland schools have flexibility in the topics they decide to cover within a unit and may adopt or adapt the materials. There is no requirement for schools to teach bushfire education as part of the geography unit. DETE does not record which schools are teaching the bushfire topics.

QFES has developed separate school-based bushfire education resources for Queensland schools. The 'Bushfire Ed' resources have been designed to help students in years five and six understand the dangers of bushfires, their causes and effects and to promote bushfire safety awareness. The resources were made available to Queensland schools in January 2014; however, only one school has downloaded the 'Bushfire Ed' resources.

QFES and DETE have not developed a strategy to ensure schoolchildren in high risk, bushfire-prone locations are being taught about bushfires.



QFES and its Rural Fire Service volunteers are involved in a range of school education activities, including presentations, fire drills, evacuation exercises and other educational programs. This education is at the request of each school and is primarily focused on general fire safety, rather than bushfire safety. These education activities do not form part of each school's curriculum program and provide limited assurance that children in high risk, bushfire-prone locations are receiving the education they require to prepare effectively for the threat of bushfires.

## 4.7 Arson prevention

Bushfire arson is a major threat to Queensland, with up to 50 per cent of all bushfires across Australia suspected of being deliberately lit or starting in suspicious circumstances. Arson is estimated to cost Australia \$1.6 billion each year. Arson prevention programs are an important strategy to prevent deliberately lit fires. The Queensland Government supported VBRC recommendation 35 related to arson prevention:

*Victoria police continue to pursue a coordinated state-wide approach to arson prevention and regularly review its approach (refer to appendix C for complete recommendation).*

Queensland implemented VBRC recommendation 35; however, QFES has now ceased delivering its arson prevention programs. Queensland no longer has a coordinated statewide approach to arson prevention. Under the existing arrangements, no agency in Queensland has oversight of arson occurring across the state and arson offenders no longer receive the education and rehabilitation required to deter them from engaging in arson.

Queensland was in the process of introducing a statewide approach to arson prevention when the VBRC finalised its report. QFES developed two arson prevention programs, the *Fight Fire Fascination* program and the *Juvenile Arson Offenders* program.

Independent evaluations of Queensland's arson prevention programs reported high levels of satisfaction with the programs and low levels of subsequent fire lighting. Despite this, QFES ceased delivering both programs in September 2012. The arson prevention programs were not replaced and there is no strategy to address arson prevention and rehabilitation in Queensland.

The *Fight Fire Fascination* program was designed to support parents in their efforts to educate their children about fire and included a series of visits to the home by trained firefighters. During these visits, firefighters explained the consequences and benefits of fire and taught the young person how to make his or her home and family safe from fire dangers.

The *Juvenile Arson Offenders* program was a structured rehabilitation program that educated juvenile offenders about the dangers of fire as well as the emotional, financial and community costs of arson. The judicial system and other government agencies referred individuals to the program.

QFES now delivers minimal arson prevention education through its community *Prepare. Act. Survive.* presentations and provides fire safety advice over the phone, at fire stations and during home visits. These visits do not address fire play by children.

Reporting arson activity and sharing these data between agencies is a critical aspect of an effective arson prevention program. QFES has not developed a formal process to report fires determined as incendiary (deliberately lit) or suspicious to the Queensland Police Service. The data gathered by both agencies vary and are incomplete, making comparisons and analysis difficult.



# Appendices

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## Appendix A—Agency comments

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In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, a copy of this report was provided to Queensland Fire and Emergency Service and the Public Safety Business Agency with a request for comment.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of the comments rests with the head of these agencies.

## Comments received from Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency



File No: CSD/01649  
Ref No: 08883-2014  
Your Ref: 2014-0119P

08 DEC 2014

Mr Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
Level 14, 53 Albert Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Greaves

Thank you for your correspondence received 20 November 2014 providing a copy of the proposed report of the Performance audit on Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness, and the opportunity to comment on the report prior to its tabling in Parliament.

Our response to each recommendation is at Attachment 1.

A wide program of reforms has been undertaken in recent times in response to the reviews that are the subject of this audit, as well as resulting from internal continuous improvement processes. As you have noted, Queensland can respond to, prevent and prepare for bushfires better now than five years ago. We appreciate that the audit findings and recommendations will inform this program of reform as we continue to improve Queensland's bushfire preparedness.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) undertakes its bushfire prevention and response roles through Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ). RFSQ is comprised of approximately 35,000 volunteers in 1500 Rural Fire Brigades and a network of approximately 2400 fire wardens, across Queensland. These volunteers are supported by a comparatively small management framework delivering operational management, community engagement, training and coordination roles. Our volunteers are the frontline of Queensland's bushfire preparedness and response and we commend them for their commitment to the safety of Queenslanders.

Significant improvements have been made to the effectiveness of the bushfire response provided by Brigades and there has been a strong focus on informing the community and equipping it to take appropriate action in an emergency.



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## Comments received from Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency

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At the same time, QFES has been working toward improved tools to plan for bushfire mitigation and greater engagement with land owners to encourage bushfire mitigation activity on their land. Key improvements include:

- Establishment of Area Fire Management Groups (AFMG) across Queensland. The AFMG in each area is the forum for collaboration between stakeholders with an interest in fire management, and coordination of individual fire management effort. AFMGs seek to reduce potential bushfire hazards, increase community awareness of fire as a land management tool, increase community education activities to build community resilience, foster cooperative working relationships and develop an operational plan for bushfire suppression.
- The Area Fire Management Plan, developed by the AFMG, is the centrepiece of fire management planning. This plan encompasses prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and may be accompanied by locality specific fire management plans (for particularly high risk locations within the area) and the mitigation plans of land management agencies and significant individual landholders. The Area Fire Management Plan is a hazard specific plan under the Local Disaster Management Plan and links bushfire management to Queensland's disaster management arrangements. Bushfire readiness plans and local action plans, identified in the audit report, are operational response plans not intended to comprehensively cover mitigation planning.
- Placement of Bushfire Safety Officers (BSO) across the state. These officers coordinate a network of approximately 300 Volunteer Community Educators who undertake vital community engagement work.
- Greatly enhanced risk mapping capability, including much more accurate vegetation mapping. This mapping is provided to local governments to inform land use planning and management of hazards in respect to new developments.

The next phase of improvements, directly relevant to the recommendations of this audit include:

- Progressing the development of a new specialist capability within RFSQ aimed at managing bushfire mitigation. This capability will be called the Office of Bushfire Mitigation and will:
  - Drive emphasis on mitigation across QFES;
  - Set policy and direction for Bushfire Safety Officers (BSOs);
  - Oversee AFMGs and provide guidance on Area Fire Management Plans;
  - Improve recording of local mitigation activities and practices to provide better monitoring and informed planning;
  - Guide bushfire arson matters and ensure that bushfire arson investigations are coordinated through the Fire Investigation Unit which has direct linkages to the Queensland Police Service;
  - Manage the Fire Warden and Permit to Light Fires system including fire warden training and the development of a fire warden manual; and
  - Ensure compliance notices for mitigation of vegetation risk are being used to an appropriate level.

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## Comments received from Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and Chief Executive Officer, Public Safety Business Agency

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Further enhancing mapping capabilities to deliver:

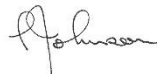
- Detailed maps of bushfire risk, available online, for each RFSQ area, AFMG and local government;
- Information for AFMGs regarding potential bushfire events, derived from analysis of new vegetation mapping by the Predictive Services Unit, QFES; and
- "Ground truthing" of each high risk location to improve the accuracy of vegetation mapping.

Additionally, in response to the findings and recommendations of the audit, QFES will ensure relevant information is provided to Local Disaster Management Groups and they will be further encouraged to use this information to better inform local communities. Existing bushfire warnings and alerts will also be examined to ensure consistent and comprehensive messages are provided to the community. These actions will reinforce community awareness activity such as the current bushfire preparedness media campaign. An evaluation strategy will also be developed to ensure specific bushfire education delivered by volunteer community educators is effective. QFES will continue to contribute to national work on the fire danger rating system.

We trust that the activity and commitments outlined above will improve bushfire safety in Queensland and we appreciate the contribution of this report to achieving that goal.

Should you require further assistance, please contact Mr Russell Neuendorf, Executive Director, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services on telephone (07) 3635 3021 or email [Russell.Neuendorf@qfes.qld.gov.au](mailto:Russell.Neuendorf@qfes.qld.gov.au) or Samantha Laws, Director, Public Safety Business Agency on telephone (07) 3364 6507 or email [Samantha.Laws@psba.qld.gov.au](mailto:Samantha.Laws@psba.qld.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



Lee A Johnson AFSM FIFireE  
**Commissioner**  
**Queensland Fire and Emergency**  
**Services**



Kelvin Anderson PSM  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Public Safety Business Agency**



## Response to recommendations

### Attachment 1 Responses to Recommendations

| Recommendation  | Agree/<br>Disagree | Timeframe for<br>Implementation  | Additional Comments  |
|---|--------------------|--|--|
| 1. Strengthens its oversight role as lead agency for mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk to acceptable levels:  |                    |  |  |
| 1.1. Coordinating land managers' efforts in assessing and mitigating bushfire risk  | Agree              | Ongoing  | QFES will strengthen its coordination role through the existing Regional Inter Department Committee (RIDC) and State Inter Department Committee (SIDC) structures, but mainly through the establishment of AFMGs. Mitigation remains the responsibility of landholders.                        |
| 1.2. Formalising the role of fire management groups to manage Queensland's fuel loads, including reporting planned and conducted hazard reduction burns and effectiveness of hazard reduction burns | Partially agree    | Formalisation of role – completed.<br><br>Framework for reporting and evaluation in place by 30 June 2015. | The terms of reference for AFMGs identify the role of the groups in encouraging, supporting and coordinating bushfire mitigation activity. Management of fuel loads remains the responsibility of landholders. Improvements to reporting and evaluation of hazard reduction burns are planned. |
| 1.3. Amending its bushfire mitigation plans to address prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and to manage Queensland's residual bushfire risk  | Agree              | 31 December 2015   | Note that Area Fire Management Plans cover prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. These plans will be enhanced. QFES does not prepare "mitigation" plans. QFES role is coordination, education, encouragement and enablement of land holders.  |
| 1.4. Developing and implementing a coordinated strategy to address arson, deterring would-be offenders and rehabilitating convicted offenders   | Partially Agree    | 31 December 2015   | QFES will improve the coordination of bushfire arson matters, including appropriate referral to QPS. QFES does not hold expertise in rehabilitation of offenders. QFES will continue to contribute to the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) on bushfire research. |
| 1.5. Working with local councils to develop and communicate local bushfire plans for communities located in high risk, bushfire-prone areas   | Agree              | 30 June 2015   | QFES will ensure relevant information is provided to Local Disaster Management Groups and they are encouraged to use this information to better inform local communities.  |

## Response to recommendations

|   |       |   |  |
|---|-------|---|--|
| 2. Improve engagement with communities to better prepare and respond to bushfires   |       |   |  |
| 2.1. Increase focus on monitoring the impact of educational materials developed   | Agree | Development by 30 June 2015. Ongoing application. | Evaluation mechanisms for educational materials will be developed and applied.   |
| 2.2. Review and amend QFES bushfire warnings and alert protocols to provide clear and consistent messages to residents about the action to be taken before and during a bushfire. | Agree | 30 March 2015                                     | QFES will examine bushfire warnings and alerts to ensure consistent and comprehensive messages are provided to the community. QFES undertakes to increase the number of trained Public Information Officers. |

## Comments received from Director-General, Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing



Queensland  
Government

Office of the  
Director-General

Department of  
**National Parks, Recreation,  
Sport and Racing**

Our Ref: CTS 30303/14  
Your Ref: 2014-9119P

Mr Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
PO Box 15396  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Greaves

I refer to your letter of 19 November 2014 advising that the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has been referred to in the proposed report on Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness.

The excerpt provided notes that the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (the department) continues to meet a five planned burn target and areas subjected to planned burn and that impacted by wildfire are incorporated into fire reporting. This may infer that the planned burn target set by QPWS is significantly influenced by wildfire activity.

By way of clarification, I advise that QPWS has a strong record of meeting or exceeding its planned burn target, achieving a five-year rolling average of 5.4% of the park and forest estate through its planned burn program alone.

As recognised, the extreme climatic conditions and vast geographic spread of Queensland creates a number of challenges in meeting planned burn targets however, the department's performance over the last five years demonstrates significant achievement. In four of the past five years we have exceeded our 5% target and in both 2010 and 2012 achieved totals in excess of 6%.

Only in 2013, as a result of extraordinary weather influences, did the QPWS not meet its target but even then managed to conduct planned burns over 4% or 0.5 million hectares of the estate.

The total area of park and forest estate burnt by wildfire varies greatly from year to year and is significantly influenced by conditions in remote parts of the State, where very large parks are situated and wildfires, even with containment, can result in vast areas being burnt. Figures for wildfire-impacted estate are reported separately to planned burns and currently show a five-year rolling average of over 8% of the estate. However, these are heavily influenced by major wildfire years in 2011 and 2012 where well in excess of 10% of the park and forest estate was impacted.

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ABN 11 322 391 452

## Comments received from Director-General, Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

QPWS has a comprehensive and systematic process for the identification of fire hazard risks across its estate which includes a particular focus on Identified Protection Zones at the urban interface. The department will continue to strengthen its relationships and cooperative arrangements with the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to undertake proactive risk identification and carry out a planned burn program to mitigate the risk of wildfire to the community and ensure effective management of Queensland's parks and forests.

Should your officers have any further enquiries, please have them contact Mr Richard Heinritz, Head of Internal Audit on telephone (07) 3338 9332 or via email [richard.heinritz@nprsr.qld.gov.au](mailto:richard.heinritz@nprsr.qld.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

  
John Glaister  
Director-General

10/12/14

## Appendix B—Audit approach

### Audit objective

The objective of the audit is to determine if Queensland is better able to prevent and prepare for bushfires following the VBRC, the Malone Review and the PACSR.

The audit addressed the objective through the sub-objectives and lines of inquiry set out in Figure B1.

**Figure B1**  
**Audit scope**

| Sub-objectives |  | Lines of Inquiry |   |
|----------------|--|------------------|---|
| 1              | QFES and PSBA have taken effective actions to address the relevant issues that led to the recommendations from the VBRC  | 1.1              | Have relevant recommendations from the VBRC been implemented effectively, in a timely manner and achieved their intended outcomes?  |
| 2              | QFES and the PSBA are taking effective actions to address the recommendations related to bushfire prevention and preparedness from the Malone Review and the PACSR | 2.1              | Are recommendations related to bushfire prevention and preparedness from the Malone Review and the PACSR being implemented effectively and in a timely manner to achieve their intended outcomes? |

Source: Queensland Audit Office

### Reason for the audit

Bushfires are a risk to Queensland communities. Population centres are increasing encroaching into rural areas and weather forecasters are predicting the long term trend is for above average weather conditions conducive to bushfires.

Effective preparation and preparedness helps QFES and communities respond to and recover from a bushfire event.

The Queensland Government has considered three major reviews that relate to bushfire prevention and preparedness since the 2009 Victorian bushfires:

- 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission
- 2013 The Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland
- 2013 Police and Community Safety Review.

Collectively, the reviews made a total of 287 recommendations and identified a range of performance gaps relevant to Queensland's bushfire safety.

### Performance audit approach

This audit was conducted in accordance with the *Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards September 2012*, which incorporate Australian auditing and assurance standards.

We conducted the audit between January and November 2014 and examined if Queensland is better able to prevent and prepare for bushfires following the three reviews.

In choosing areas of focus during this audit, we selected those most critical to Queensland's bushfire preparedness. This report concentrates on mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk and preparing communities for the threat of bushfires.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) were subject to this audit.

The audit included:

- analysis of the QFES bushfire mitigation plans, procedures and systems
- analysis of mitigation activities by QFES
- interviews with QFES regional offices (South Eastern, Brisbane, North Coast and South Western regions)
- interviews with the state office of QFES and PSBA
- fieldwork at the QFES South Eastern regional office.

## Appendix C— VBRC recommendations

**Figure C1**  
Implementation status of VBRC recommendations reported by PSBA

| VBRC recommendation   | Implementation status                               |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> The State revise its bushfire safety policy. While adopting the national <i>Prepare. Act. Survive.</i> framework in Victoria, the policy should do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• emphasise that all fires are different in ways that require an awareness of fire conditions, local circumstances and personal capacity</li> <li>• recognise that the heightened risk on the worst days demands a different response</li> <li>• retain those elements of the existing bushfire policy that have proved effective</li> <li>• strengthen the range of options available in the face of fire, including community refuges, bushfire shelters and evacuation</li> <li>• ensure that local solutions are tailored and known to communities through local bushfire planning</li> <li>• improve advice on the nature of fire and house defendability, taking account of broader landscape risks.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> The State revise the approach to community bushfire safety education in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that its publications and educational materials reflect the revised bushfire safety policy</li> <li>• equip all fire agency personnel with the information needed to effectively communicate the policy to the public as required</li> <li>• ensure that in content and delivery the program is flexible enough to engage individuals, households and communities and to accommodate their needs and circumstances</li> <li>• regularly evaluate the effectiveness of community education programs and amend them as necessary.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p> |

| VBRC recommendation   | Implementation status  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>urgently develop for communities at risk of bushfire local plans that contain contingency options such as evacuation and shelter</li> <li>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</li> <li>compile and maintain a list of vulnerable residents who need tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate and provide this list to local police and anyone else with pre-arranged responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Recommendation in progress:</b> Existing arrangements covered points 1 and 2. Point 3 is in progress).</p> <p><b>Our comment:</b> Queensland assessed recommendation as covered by existing arrangements; however, existing arrangements did not tailor bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities, nor did they include a list of organisations where vulnerable residents are located.</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> The State introduce a comprehensive approach to shelter options that includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing standards for community refuges as a matter of priority and replacing the 2005 Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice</li> <li>designating community refuges—particularly in areas of very high risk—where other bushfire safety options are limited</li> <li>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</li> <li>acknowledging personal shelters around their homes as a fall back option for individuals.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>The Queensland Government did not support community refuges.</b></p> <p><b>The Queensland Government supported remaining sections of this recommendation which existing arrangements covered.</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage individuals—especially vulnerable people—to relocate early</li> <li>include consideration of plans for assisted evacuation of vulnerable people</li> <li>recommend ‘emergency evacuation’.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland's existing arrangements covered the recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>The recommendation was implemented nationally</b></p>  |



| VBRC recommendation   | Implementation status  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>The recommendation was implemented nationally</b></p>              |
| <p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures to require the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• that a full level 3 IMT be led by a level 3 Incident Controller unless the State Controller determines otherwise.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> The Country Fire Authority and the 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> The State consider amending the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> and the <i>Emergency Management Manual Victoria</i> in order to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remove the title of Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services</li> <li>• clarify the function and powers of the Minister</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> The State consider either amending the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 13:</b> The State consider amending the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations short of a state of disaster.</p>  | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 14:</b> The Victorian fire agencies amend the AIIMS framework before the 2010–11 fire season in order to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• ensure that an individual with local knowledge is incorporated in an incident management team.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Australia implemented recommendation nationally</b></p>            |
| <p><b>Recommendation 15:</b> The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• provide regular training to IMT staff, highlighting the importance of information and reinforcing the support available from specialists within the State Control Centre.</li> </ul>                     | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 16:</b> The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment improve mapping support in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DSE providing mapping data free of charge to emergency response agencies</li> <li>• greatly increasing the CFA's 'write' access to FireMap for incident management team staff</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• requiring before the 2010–11 fire season that FireMap be used for joint incidents.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Recommendation 17:</b> The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment establish before the 2010–11 fire season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a uniform, objective and transparent process based on the current DSE approach for the accreditation of level 3 Incident Controllers</li> <li>• a performance review system for level 3 Incident Controllers</li> <li>• a traineeship program for progression from level 2 to level 3 incident management team positions.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Our comment:</b> Queensland assessed recommendation did not apply to Queensland; however, the Queensland Government supported a performance review system for level 3 Incident Controllers which existing arrangements covered.</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 18:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 19:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 20:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 21:</b> 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 firefighting and support activities to be incorporated in preparedness plans and used on days of high fire risk.</p>  | <p><b>Australia is implementing recommendation nationally</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Recommendation 22:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>   |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 23:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 24:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 25:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 26:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 27:</b> The State amend the Regulations under Victoria’s <i>Electricity Safety Act 1998</i> and otherwise take such steps as may be required to give effect to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>       |
| <p><b>Recommendation 28:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>       |
| <p><b>Recommendation 29:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>       |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Recommendation 30:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 31:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 32:</b> The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disable the reclose function on the automatic circuit reclosers on all SWER lines for the six weeks of greatest risk in every fire season</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 33:</b> The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fit spreaders to any lines with a history of clashing or the potential to do so</li> <li>• fit or retrofit all spans that are more than 300 metres long with vibration dampers as soon as is reasonably practicable.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 34:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 35:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high-level commitment from senior police</li> <li>• a research program aimed at refining arson prevention and detection strategies</li> <li>• centralised coordination that includes comprehensive training, periodic evaluation of arson prevention strategies and programs, and promotion of best-practice prevention approaches</li> <li>• a requirement that all fire-prone police service areas have arson prevention plans and programs, according to their level of risk.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p> <p><b>Our comment:</b> Queensland implemented recommendation 35; however, QFES has now ceased delivering its arson prevention programs and Queensland no longer has a statewide approach to arson prevention.</p> |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Recommendation 36:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Australia implemented recommendation nationally</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 37:</b> The State identify a central point of responsibility for and expertise in mapping bushfire risk to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• map and designate Bushfire-prone Areas for the purposes of planning and building controls, in consultation with municipal councils and fire agencies</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>           |
| <p><b>Recommendation 38:</b> The State implement a regional settlement policy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• takes account of the management of bushfire risk, including that associated with small, undeveloped rural lots</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>           |
| <p><b>Recommendation 39:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• amend clause 44.06 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to provide a comprehensive Bushfire-prone Overlay provision.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>           |

| VBRC recommendation   | Implementation status  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 40:</b> 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>substantially restrict new developments and subdivisions in those areas of highest risk in the Bushfire-prone Overlay</li> <li>set out the CFA’s guidelines for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions—including the minimum defensible space requirements for different risk levels</li> <li>clarify that the CFA will approve new developments and subdivisions only if the recommended bushfire protection measures—including the minimum defensible space—can be created and maintained on a continuing basis</li> <li>emphasise the need for enduring permit conditions—in particular, conditions for the creation and maintenance of minimum defensible space to be maintained for the life of the development.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 41:</b> The State:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>develop guidelines for determining the maximum level of native vegetation removal for bushfire risk mitigation, beyond which level the application would be rejected.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 42:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 43:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 44:</b> The Country Fire Authority produce for community guidance material on fire-resistant landscape and garden design, including a list of fire-resistant species.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland implemented recommendation</b></p>                      |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 45:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 46:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>The Queensland Government did not support recommendation</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Recommendation 47:</b> Standards Australia do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amend the objective of AS 3959-2009, <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i>, to ensure that it incorporates reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack</li> <li>• review, and amend as appropriate, the testing methods prescribed in its standards for <i>Tests on Elements of Construction for Buildings Exposed to Simulated Bushfire Attack</i> (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.</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Australia implemented recommendation nationally</b></p>            |
| <p><b>Recommendation 48:</b> The Australian Building Codes Board do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• amend the performance requirements in the Building Code of Australia to ensure that they incorporate reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack</li> <li>• work with Standards Australia to effect expeditious continuing review and development of AS 3959, <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i>, and other bushfire-related standards referred to in the Building Code of Australia</li> <li>• negotiate with Standards Australia and SAI Global Ltd an arrangement for free online access to AS 3959-2009, <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas</i>, the other Australian standards referred to in AS 3959-2009, and any other bushfire-related Australian standards referred to in the Building Code of Australia</li> <li>• amend the Building Code of Australia to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                  |



| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 49:</b> The State modify its adoption of the Building Code of Australia for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)</li> <li>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</li> <li>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.</li> </ul> | <p><b>The Queensland Government did not support the recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 50:</b> Standards Australia move expeditiously to develop a standard for bushfire sprinklers and sprayers.</p>  | <p><b>Australia implemented recommendation nationally</b></p>              |
| <p><b>Recommendation 51:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                    |
| <p><b>Recommendation 52:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                    |
| <p><b>Recommendation 53:</b> The State amend s. 32 of the <i>Sale of Land Act 1962</i> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                    |
| <p><b>Recommendation 54:</b> The State amend the <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i> to enable the Chief Officer to delegate the power to issue fire prevention notices.</p>  | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                   |
| <p><b>Recommendation 55:</b> The State initiate the development of education and training options to improve understanding of bushfire risk management in the building and planning regimes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing regular training and guidance material to planning and building practitioners</li> <li>helping a suitable tertiary institution design and implement a course on bushfire planning and design in Victoria.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p>   |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 56:</b> 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 57:</b> The Department of Sustainability and Environment 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 58:</b> The Department of Sustainability and Environment 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.</p>   | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 59:</b> The Department of Sustainability and Environment amend the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land in order to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide a clear statement of objectives, expressed as measurable outcomes</li> <li>• include an explicit risk-analysis model for more objective and transparent resolution of competing objectives, where human life is the highest priority</li> <li>• specify the characteristics of fire management zones—including burn size, percentage area burnt within the prescribed burn, and residual fuel loading</li> <li>• adopt the use of the term ‘bushfire’ rather than ‘wildfire’.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>                 |
| <p><b>Recommendation 60:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 61:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Existing arrangements in Queensland covered recommendation</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 62:</b> 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 <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i> and with the objectives expressed in the VicRoads 1985 Code of Practice.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>                  |

| VBRC recommendation  | Implementation status  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Recommendation 63:</b> The State enact legislation designed to achieve two specific ends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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 and make the Chief Fire Officer of the Department of Sustainability and Environment a statutory appointment.</li> </ul> <p>The Fire Commissioner should have responsibility for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting and directing reform aimed at increasing the operational capability, interoperability and resilience of Victoria's fire services</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• providing to government periodic advice on the metropolitan fire district boundary on the basis of triggers, frequency and criteria approved by government</li> <li>• representing Victorian interests on operational matters in national committees.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>       |
| <p><b>Recommendation 64:</b> The State replace the Fire Services Levy with a property-based levy and introduce concessions for low-income earners.</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>       |
| <p><b>Recommendation 65:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Australian implemented recommendation nationally</b></p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 66:</b> 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.</p>  | <p><b>Queensland is implementing recommendation</b></p>        |
| <p><b>Recommendation 67:</b> The State consider the development of legislation for the conduct of inquiries in Victoria—in particular, the conduct of royal commissions.</p>   | <p><b>Recommendation did not apply to Queensland</b></p>       |



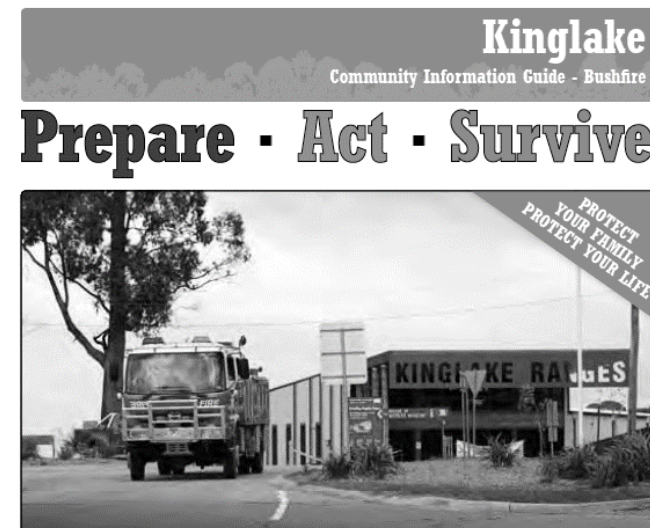
## Appendix D—Community Information Guides

Figure D1  
Kinglake Community Information Guide

### Kinglake Community Information Guide

In response to VBRC recommendation 3, the Victorian Government developed 274 community information guides for communities at risk of bushfire or grassfire. These guides contain critical fire and emergency information relevant to each community and have been developed to help residents identify their fire risks and develop their own bushfire survival plans.

Pictured is the community information guide for Kinglake in Victoria. The 16-page community information guide includes a description of Kinglake's bushfire risk, local emergency contact details, bushfire warnings and advice, a bushfire threat map, evacuation options and other key bushfire preparedness information for the Kinglake community.



#### Why Kinglake is at risk of bushfire

Fire Authorities have assessed Kinglake as having an EXTREME bushfire risk. Local residents and visitors should be prepared for fire and have a plan for when the Fire Danger Rating is SEVERE, EXTREME or CODE RED.

This community information guide includes a map containing key elements of Kinglake's bushfire risk. At the time of publication, there are NO designated Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort at Kinglake.

Important community bushfire safety information is provided to help you make informed decisions about how to survive a bushfire, whether you're a local resident or a visitor to the area. Planning and preparation can save lives in a bushfire. Use this community information guide to help you and your family to prepare.



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# Prepare

It's important if you live, work and travel in this area, to plan what you will do if a bushfire threatens.

## Kinglake Bushfire Threat Map

### Understand your bushfire risk

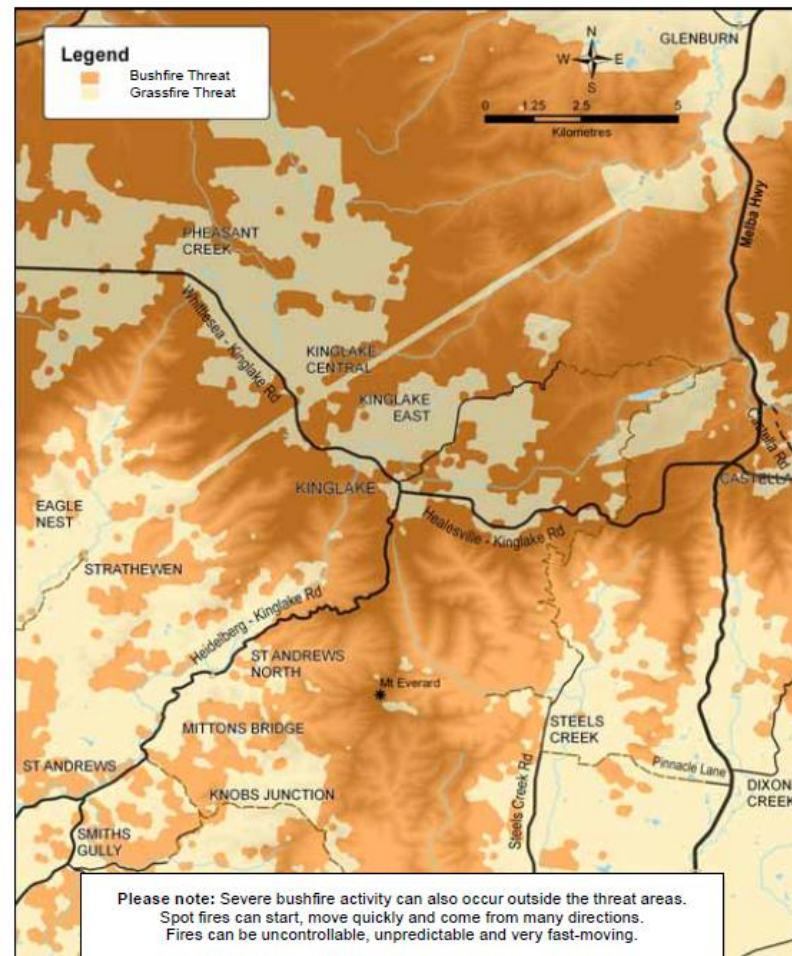
- Kinglake has been assessed as having an EXTREME bushfire risk in accordance with the Victorian Fire Risk Register.
- This assessment takes into account local factors such as:
  - Kinglake is prone to and has experienced major fires in the past.
  - Bushfires move quickly uphill, so properties situated on the ridge edges against bushland will be at greater risk.
- It is impossible for emergency services to protect every individual home or property.
- Remember, your usual travel routes may be limited or blocked.
- Know the daily Fire Danger Rating in the district where you live or travel [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

### Reduce your bushfire risk

- Prepare your home and property against bushfire, burning embers and radiant heat.
- A well-prepared home has a greater chance of not being destroyed by bushfire.
- Murrindindi Shire offers a free green waste disposal opportunity before each fire season. Watch local newspapers for dates.
- **Develop and practise your Bushfire Survival Plan.**
- **You will also need to plan for your pets' safety.**
- You can attend or join:
  - A local Fire Ready Victoria meeting
  - A Bushfire Planning Workshop
  - A neighbourhood Community Fireguard Group
- **The Household Bushfire Self-Assessment Tool is available to help individuals assess the bushfire risk on their own property.**



You can download the CFA FireReady kit, containing the full Leaving Early Bushfire Survival Plan from [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au), or call 1800 240 667 (TTY 1800 122 969)



# Prepare

**FACT**

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself, your family and your home for the threat of bushfire. You need to act decisively in accordance with your **Bushfire Survival Plan** when bushfires threaten. Your survival depends on your preparations and the decisions you make.



## Leave early

Leaving early is always the safest option.

### Leaving early is more important when:

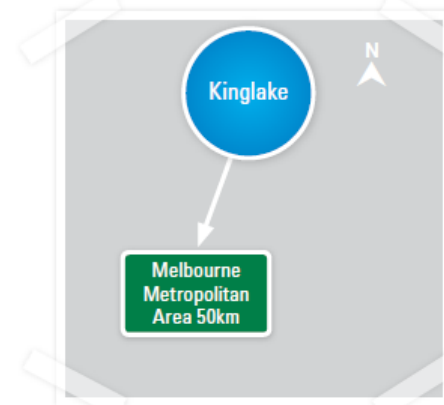
- The Fire Danger Rating is **CODE RED**. Homes aren't designed to withstand a bushfire during these conditions. Any fire that starts and takes hold will be so intense that you won't be safe to stay and defend your home – no matter how well prepared it is.
- There are children, elderly or disabled people in your home. People who are vulnerable due to age, health, or any other reason, should always leave early.
- You have not prepared yourself or your property to give you and your home the best level of protection from a fire.
- Your house is not defensible. Some homes are not safe to defend because of their location or construction.

If you plan to leave, then you should leave well before a fire reaches your area and well before you are under threat. Follow the actions recommended for the Fire Danger Rating of the day (see pages 6 and 7). **Visit CFA website [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)**

### Where will you go?

- Is it a safe choice? You may choose somewhere that suits your personal needs and circumstances, e.g. a family member's house in an urban area with a backyard for your pet, or shopping centre complex, or central business district of a large regional centre.
- If you don't have any other options, you may wish to consider the following township: **Melbourne Metropolitan Area**.
- Always tell family and friends or your Community FireGuard Group that you are leaving and where you are planning to go.
- Identify people in your street who might need more help. Know your neighbours, encourage them to have support networks and offer to help them fill out a Bushfire Leaving Early Plan.

If you - or someone you care for - will need help to prepare and leave early when there is high fire risk, obtain a Red Cross **Bushfire: Preparing to leave early guide** at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or request a copy by phoning the **Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667**



## PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

**PREPARE.** You must make important decisions before the fire season starts.

**ACT.** The higher the Fire Danger Rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

**SURVIVE.** Fires may threaten without warning, so you need to know what you will do to survive.

- Leaving early can be the night before or early in the day.
- Determine **YOUR** safest route. All routes take you through high vegetation.



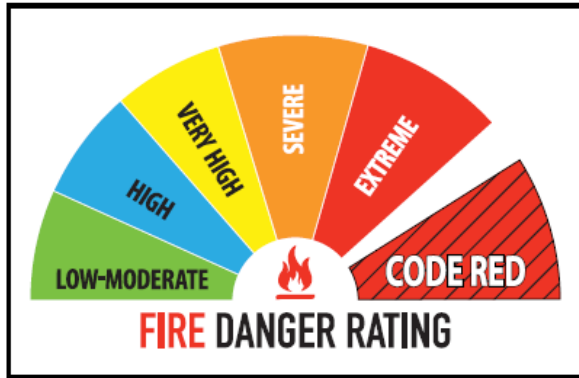
## How you can stay in touch

- Bookmark the CFA incidents webpage ([www.cfa.vic.gov.au/fires](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/fires)).
- Follow CFA on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/cfa\\_updates](http://www.twitter.com/cfa_updates)).
- Join the CFA Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/cfavic](http://www.facebook.com/cfavic)).
- Access the CFA mobile website at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/mobile](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/mobile)
- Download the FireReady app if you have a smartphone or tablet Apple (App Store) and Android (Google play).
- Beware, cordless home phones will NOT work if the mains power supply is cut.
- Wireless communications, internet and landlines may vary between service providers.
- Mobile phone coverage in and around Kinglake is generally poor, may not be accessible during times of emergency and may vary between service providers.
- There is a community alerting siren in Kinglake, see page 8 for further details.
- Sirens sounding nearby are a trigger for you to seek information, as they may indicate fire activity in your area. When you hear a siren, further information may be available via ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, and SKY News TV (see page 16).

A written fire plan may save your life - would you remember a plan that's just in your head if your surrounded by smoke, heat, flame and noise?

# Act

Note *your* district's Fire Danger Rating daily as *your* trigger to act.



## Kinglake is in the North Central Fire District



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## Triggers

## Actions

|                     | What does it mean?  | What should I do?  |
|---------------------|---|--|
| <b>CODE RED</b>     | <p>These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.</p> <p>The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas.</p>  | <p>Leaving high risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option – do not wait and see.</p> <p>Avoid forested areas, thick bush and long, dry grass.</p> <p>Know your trigger.</p> <p>Make a decision about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–when you will leave</li> <li>–where you will go</li> <li>–how you will get there</li> <li>–when you will return</li> <li>–what you will do if you cannot leave</li> </ul>   |
| <b>EXTREME</b>      | <p>Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions.</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and will come from many directions.</p> <p>Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety.</p> <p>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.</p> | <p>Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. This means your home needs to be situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, you are well prepared and you can actively defend your home if a fire starts.</p> <p>If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and get information by listening to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations or Sky News TV, going to <a href="http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au">www.cfa.vic.gov.au</a> or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on <b>1800 240 667</b>.</p> |
| <b>SEVERE</b>       | <p>Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions.</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable.</p> <p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety.</p> <p>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.</p>  | <p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your bushfire survival plan.</p> <p>If you are not prepared, leaving bushfire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and get information by listening to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations or Sky News TV, going to <a href="http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au">www.cfa.vic.gov.au</a> or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on <b>1800 240 667</b>.</p>   |
| <b>VERY HIGH</b>    | <p>If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions and homes can provide safety.</p>   | <p>Check your bushfire survival plan.</p>  |
| <b>HIGH</b>         |   | <p>Monitor conditions.</p>   |
| <b>LOW-MODERATE</b> | <p>Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk.</p> <p>Controlled burning off may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply.</p>  | <p>Action may be needed.</p> <p>Leave if necessary.</p>  |

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# Act Planned Emergency Service Actions

## What are Bushfire Warnings and Advice?

During a bushfire, warnings and advice are used to give you an indication of the level of threat from a fire. You'll find these on the CFA website at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) and on radio and television.

**There are three levels of bushfire warnings and advice plus a recommendation to evacuate.**

### ADVICE

- General information to keep you up-to-date with developments.

### WATCH AND ACT

- A fire is approaching you.
- Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect your life and your family.

### EMERGENCY WARNING

- You are in imminent danger and need to take action immediately.
- You will be impacted by fire.



For some fires, you may hear a warning message, such as a siren over your radio or television, or you may receive a text message or phone call.

**Other fires may start so quickly that there will be no time for any warning at all.**

Bushfire warnings and advice are not always given in the above order. As an example, the first warning you receive may be Watch and Act.

### CFA Brigade and Community Alerting Sirens - Community alerts for all emergencies

A siren sounding at the Kinglake Fire Brigade will have one of two consistent meanings:

- A short signal (up to 90 seconds) means the brigade is responding to an incident nearby.
- A continuous signal (up to 5 minutes) means an emergency is occurring that may impact on the local area.

In either event, the message of a siren sound will always be 'seek further information' from sources such as emergency services' websites, the Victorian Bushfire Information Line or emergency broadcasters (page 16).

## Evacuation

You may be advised to evacuate by police or emergency services. In fast-moving situations, you may not always receive a warning or recommendation to evacuate. Stay informed, aware of local conditions and the Fire Danger Rating, so that you can plan ahead and make the right decision in a bushfire. Leaving early is always the safest option. Refer to 'Community Evacuation Information', available at [www.police.vic.gov.au](http://www.police.vic.gov.au)

Should a recommendation to evacuate be made, the following advice would apply:

- A fire is rapidly advancing.
- If advised, travel to the evacuation destination as advised by emergency services.
- Strictly follow all instructions and advice.

### Fire Agencies

- Saving life is the highest priority
- Issue advice and warnings
- Control and manage fire fighting activities
- Where safe to do so protect:
  - Identified community assets
  - Property
  - The environment

### Victoria Police

- Keep people safe and property secure
- Control traffic in bushfire areas
- Manage evacuations
- Register people who have evacuated
- Work with other agencies to keep the community informed

### Kinglake

- Be aware that power supplies may be cut or interrupted without warning during a bushfire
- If you want to monitor warnings you will need to download the FireReady Victoria App on your phone. This is available from the CFA website
- Schools and preschools will close on Code Red days

### Murrindindi Shire

- Activate Municipal Emergency Management Plans
  - Support and work with emergency services and responding agencies
  - Assist with the provision of local information to the Community and Media
  - Activate and support Emergency Relief Centres when required
  - Assist and support the Community to recover from the emergency
- Note: On Code Red days, council services may not be available as usual

### VicRoads

- Manage road closures on advice from Police and Fire Agencies
- Undertake safety inspections of roads prior to opening
- Provide advice to communities about road closures

# Bushfire Survival Options

## WHAT TO DO

### Leave Early

- When the Fire Danger Rating is Code Red, leaving early is always the safest option
- Leave early destinations could include homes of families & friends who live outside the risk area, a nearby town or built up area

Always the safest option

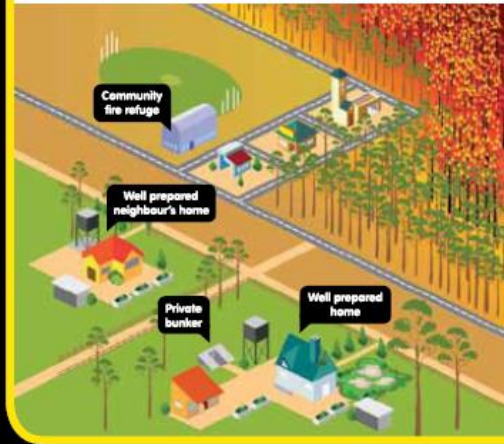


### Well Prepared

If leaving the high-risk area is no longer an option, there may be options close to where you are that could protect you. These include:

- A well prepared home (yours or your neighbours') that you can actively defend on Severe & Extreme Fire Danger Rating days only
- Private Bushfire Shelter (bunker) that meets current regulations
- Designated community fire refuge

Your safety is not guaranteed

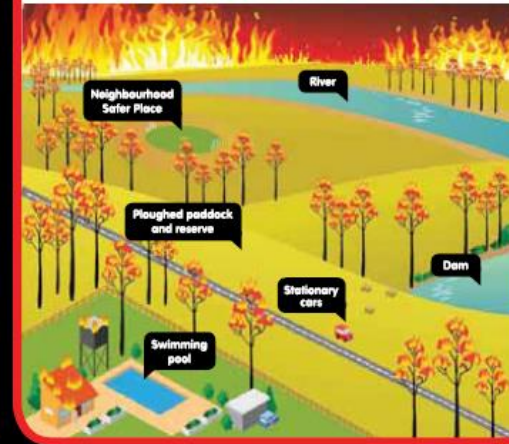


### Last Resort

In situations where no other options are available to you, taking shelter in one of the below may protect from radiant heat:

- Neighbourhood Safer Place (place of last resort)
- Stationary car in a clear area
- Ploughed paddock or reserve
- Body of water (i.e. beach, swimming pool, dam, river, etc.)

High risk of trauma, injury or death



For more information on how to prepare your own Bushfire Survival Plan:

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

**FireReady** 



# Survive

Fire may threaten  
without warning so  
you need to know  
what to do to survive.

## Community Fire Refuges

- A Community Fire Refuge is a place that is a building open to the public that can provide short-term shelter from immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire event.
- There is no Community Fire Refuge located in Kinglake.

## Activate **your** bushfire survival plan **early**

- Remember, bushfires can happen when least expected. Planning and preparation are essential.
- A last-minute decision may cost you and your family your lives.
- **You may not receive an official warning about a bushfire.**
- Do NOT expect a fire truck at your property.
- Your survival and safety depend on the decisions you make.
- Always tell family and friends what you are planning to do.
- Observe the weather, including the direction the wind is blowing.
- Watch what is happening around you and where a bushfire may be located.

## Leaving late is **DANGEROUS**

- Travel on roads in this area during a fire is dangerous.
- You may be impacted by fire, and visibility may be poor due to smoke.
- The roads may be blocked due to falling trees, collisions or emergency vehicles.
- Usual travel routes may not be accessible.
- Don't assume you can turn back, as the road may have become blocked behind you.
- Lives are more likely to be lost when people make a last-minute decision to flee a bushfire.
- The risk of being overrun by bushfire is very real. Travel on all roads out of Kinglake is very dangerous, as all roads have high vegetation.
- People caught outside are likely to face severe and often fatal levels of radiant heat.
- Leaving late is a DEADLY option.

## There is **no** Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort in Kinglake

It is important that you plan to leave early (see page 4). Assemble a relocation kit.

### Your relocation kit

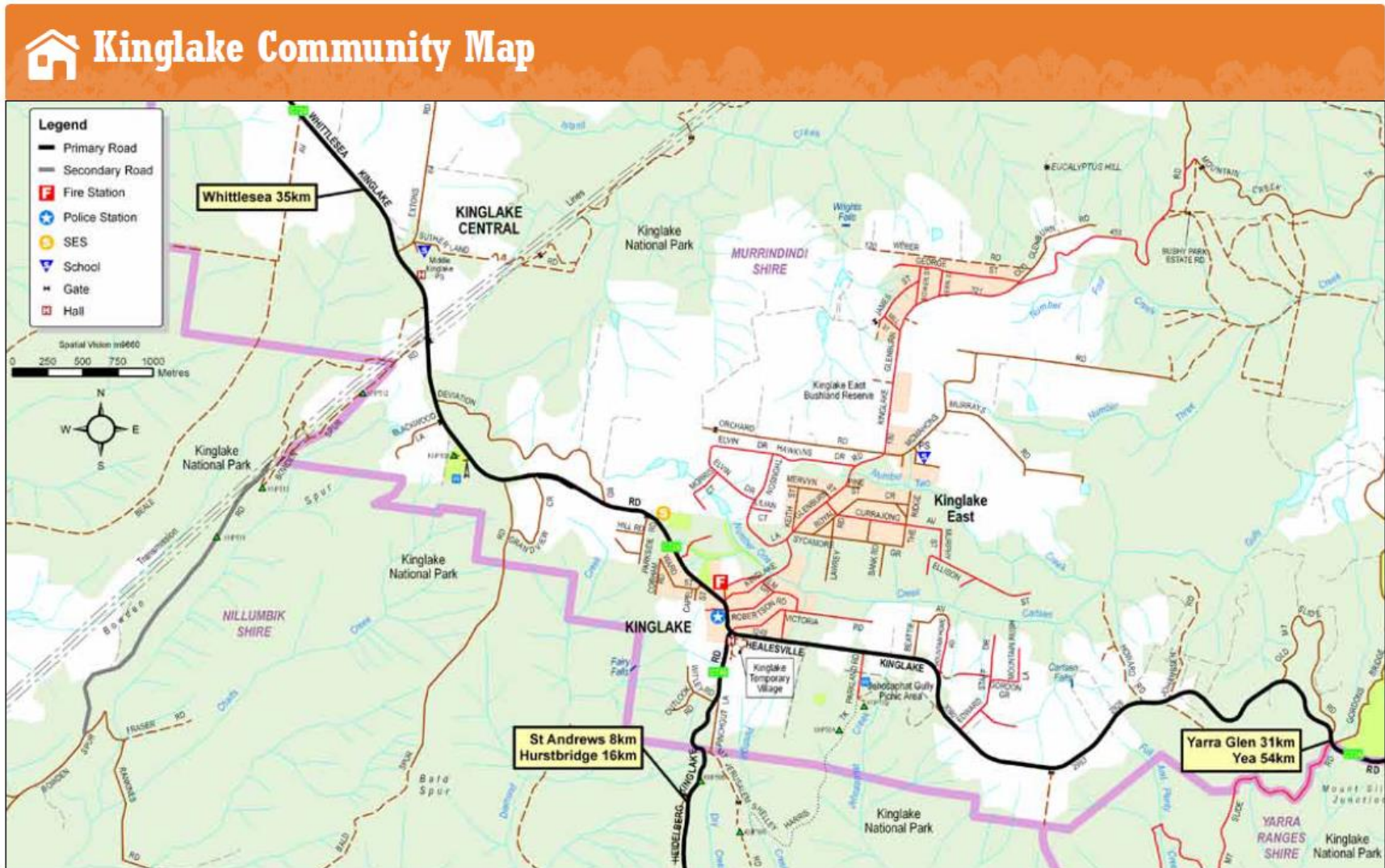
Have a relocation kit with essential items already prepared and make sure it is stored in an easily accessible place.

Some of the things that you might like to include in your kit are:

### Relocation checklist

|  |                          |                        |                          |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Protective clothing made from natural fibres | <input type="checkbox"/> | Important documents    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Woollen blankets                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | First aid kit          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Water and medications                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cash, ATM/credit cards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Toiletries and sanitary supplies             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Valuables and photos   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mobile phone and charger                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Battery powered radio  | <input type="checkbox"/> |





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# Making Victoria FireReady

**In EMERGENCY dial 000 (TTY 106)**

Do not call Triple Zero for information or advice. Calling Triple Zero unnecessarily may put others who are in a genuine emergency situation at risk.

## Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL): 1800 240 667

### Emergency Contact Information

Tuning into your emergency broadcaster and CFA website on days of high fire danger ratings is the most reliable way of staying informed. Mains power may be unavailable, or fail, during fire and emergencies – keep a battery powered radio available.

**Emergency Broadcasters:** Sky News TV, ABC 774 AM, Fox 101.9 FM, Triple M 105.1 FM, Gold 104.3 FM, Classic Rock 91.5 FM, Nova 100.3 FM, 3AW 693 AM, Magic 1278 AM, SEN 1116 AM, Mix 101.1 FM, Plenty Valley 88.6 FM, UGFM 98.9 FM

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Road closures:</b>   | 13 11 70 <a href="http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au">www.vicroads.vic.gov.au</a> |
| <b>National Park, State Forest and Park closures:</b>           | 13 19 63 <a href="http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au">www.parkweb.vic.gov.au</a>   |
| <b>School, early childhood services and bus route closures:</b> | <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au">www.education.vic.gov.au</a>        |
| <b>24 Hour Wildlife Emergency:</b>                              | 13 000 WILDLIFE or 1300 094 535   |
| <b>24 Hour NURSE-ON-CALL:</b>                                   | 1300 60 60 24   |

### Bushfire Information:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>CFA website:</b>                    | <a href="http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au">www.cfa.vic.gov.au</a>                |
| <b>Follow CFA on Twitter:</b>          | <a href="https://twitter.com/cfa_updates">www.twitter.com/cfa_updates</a> |
| <b>Join the CFA Facebook page:</b>     | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/cfavic">www.facebook.com/cfavic</a>     |
| <b>DEPI Website (Planned burning):</b> | <a href="http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/burns">www.depi.vic.gov.au/burns</a>  |



### Further Information

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Dept of Human Services:</b>                     | <a href="http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency">www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency</a>                     |
| <b>Dept of Environment and Primary Industries:</b> | 13 61 86 <a href="http://www.depi.vic.gov.au">www.depi.vic.gov.au</a>                              |
| <b>Weather:</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.bom.gov.au">www.bom.gov.au</a>   |
| <b>CFA District Office:</b>                        | (03) 5799 1517 ( <b>non emergency calls only</b> )   |
| <b>Murrindindi Shire:</b>                          | (03) 5772 0333 <a href="http://www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au">www.murrindindi.vic.gov.au</a>          |
| <b>Fire Management Plan:</b>                       | <a href="http://www.tinyurl.com/Murrindindi-Shire-MFMP">www.tinyurl.com/Murrindindi-Shire-MFMP</a> |

Deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired? **Contact the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677** if you use a **TTY, 1800 555 727** if you use Speak and Listen, and then ask for: **1800 240 667**



## Appendix E— Hazard specific plans

Figure E1 outlines nine different hazards and the state agency responsible for the related hazard specific plans. Each plan must address actions across all phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

**Figure E1**  
**Primary agency responsibility for specific hazards**

| Hazard                     | Primary Agency                                    | State and National Plans   |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Animal and plant disease   | Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN)<br>Australian Aquatic Veterinary Emergency Plan (AQUAVETPLAN)<br>Australian Emergency Plant Pest Response Plan (PLANTPLAN)<br>Biosecurity Emergency Operations Manual (BEOM) |
| Biological (human related) | Queensland Health                                 | State of Queensland Multi-agency Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological Incidents  |
| Bushfire                   | Queensland Fire and Emergency Services            | Wildfire Mitigation and Readiness Plans (Regional)   |
| Chemical                   | Queensland Fire and Emergency Services            | State of Queensland Multi-agency Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological Incidents  |
| Heat wave                  | Queensland Health                                 | Heat Stress Response Plan  |
| Pandemic                   | Queensland Health                                 | Queensland Pandemic Influenza Plan National Action Plan for Human Influenza Pandemic   |
| Ship-sourced pollution     | Transport and Main Roads                          | Queensland Coastal Contingency Action Plan<br>National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies   |
| Radiological               | Queensland Health                                 | State of Queensland Multi-agency Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological Incidents  |
| Terrorism                  | Queensland Police                                 | Queensland Counter-Terrorism Plan<br>National Counter-Terrorism Plan   |

Source: 2013-2014 Queensland State Disaster Management Plan





# Auditor-General Reports to Parliament

## Reports tabled in 2014–15

| Number | Title  | Date tabled in Legislative Assembly |
|--------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1.     | Results of audit: Internal control systems 2013–14                         | 11 July 2014                        |
| 2.     | Hospital infrastructure projects   | October 2014                        |
| 3.     | Emergency department performance reporting                                 | October 2014                        |
| 4.     | Results of audit: State public sector entities for 2013–14                 | November 2014                       |
| 5.     | Results of audit: Hospital and Health Service entities 2013–14             | November 2014                       |
| 6.     | Results of audit: Public non-financial corporations                        | November 2014                       |
| 7.     | Results of audit: Queensland state government financial statements 2013–14 | December 2014                       |
| 8.     | Traveltrain renewal: Sunlander 14  | December 2014                       |
| 9.     | 2018 Commonwealth Games progress   | December 2014                       |
| 10.    | Bushfire prevention and preparedness                                       | December 2014                       |