

# Meeting notes

## Community Recovery Bushfire Reference Group

<b>Date</b>	15 September 2020	<b>Time</b>	5pm
<b>Venue</b>	Zoom	<b>Chair</b>	Mayor David West
		<b>Note-taker</b>	Michelle Jobson
<b>Attendance</b>	Mayor David West, Paul De Szell, Janine Friedrich, Daniel Trudgeon, Mike Parsons, Danitry Gerrand, Lindsay Segal, Neal Parker, Bettina Bettington, Jenny Brewer, Kylie Atkinson, Mark Johnson, Peter Ruprecht, Sharon Chamberlain, Trypheyne McShane, Alastair Breingan & Linda MacKenzie.		
<b>Apologies</b>	Lucinda Fischer, Deputy Mayor Claire Pontin, Greg Hale, Kim MacDonald, Adam Parish, Sandra Zielke & Bree Katsamangos.		

## Meeting items

Item	Key points/actions
1	<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>
2	<b>Outstanding actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Possibility of letterbox drop</b>  Paul advised that Council are working with Resilience NSW and NSW RFS to create a pamphlet to raise awareness of bushfire safety. The pamphlet will be delivered to all residents with a mailbox in the MidCoast Council area by the end of October. </li> <li> <b>Options available to allow process of property owner details more efficient for bushfire landowners</b>  Paul advised that due to the Privacy Act Council are unable to provide personal information without the person's permission. Council follows a procedure for all of these requests. </li> <li> <b>Creation of categories for group to provide feedback on issues</b>  Paul advised that once all issues have been collated, the categories will be discussed at next meeting. </li> <li> <b>Group members to provide a list of actions/issues</b>  Paul reminded the group to forward their actions/issues to Michelle. </li> <li> <b>Invite LEMO to future meeting</b>  Paul will invite the Acting LEMO to next meeting. </li> </ul>

Item	Key points/actions
3	<p data-bbox="293 250 703 286"><b>Community Recovery Officer</b></p> <p data-bbox="293 318 1382 383">Paul advised that Janine Friedrich was successful in gaining one of the Community Recovery Officer positions, the other position will be readvertised.</p> <p data-bbox="293 414 1390 618">Janine advised that her new position is based on community engagement at community level. She will continue to assist with bushfire enquiries but will focus on looking at rolling out community events. She will be arranging one-on-one conversations with all reference group members to discuss events in each community. The events will be focus groups, there won't be any official bushfire agency representations at these events.</p> <p data-bbox="293 649 1362 784">Paul advised that Resilience NSW is no longer engaged in our area since the employment of the Community Recovery Officer position and that Service NSW is the best option when enquiring about support for bushfires. Council are able to direct people in the right direction.</p> <p data-bbox="293 815 1369 916">Paul referred to previous comments regarding to people still requiring assistance and acknowledged that there is a gap in recovery but as a group we need to focus on resilience and preparedness.</p> <p data-bbox="293 947 1355 1081">Neal advised that Resilience NSW commenced a survey in the past week with all people impacted by bushfires via email or telephone. Janine further advised that Resilience NSW and Service NSW are working off a list provided by Council and Red Cross will be following up on residents who don't have email addresses.</p> <p data-bbox="293 1113 1385 1350">Paul advised that there is a real reluctance for some people to speak to any level of government irrespective of what assistance they require. Council's building team are currently seeing some building occurring in places where approval hasn't been provided, so there will be an ongoing issue in the regulatory space with illegal buildings which will have to be addressed at some stage. The message to the community is that if you are planning of rebuilding you need to contact the Council team.</p> <p data-bbox="293 1382 1382 1516">Peter agreed that residents need to contact the Council team if they are planning to rebuild but the issue with some government departments is the information that they are sending to residents are too large and some people are unable to open them. The group needs to support residents in their area.</p> <p data-bbox="293 1547 1377 1751">Trypheyne advised that the community at Possum Brush haven't received any mail outs. She further advised that during and after the bushfire event various officials from government agencies were entering properties without talking to the property owners. She spoke to one of the agencies and advised them that they need to speak to property owners and provide them with information as to what is happening.</p> <p data-bbox="293 1783 1332 1848">Jenny agreed that it takes time to build trust and a relationship with affected property owners.</p> <p data-bbox="293 1879 1385 1980">Alastair advised that one of the issues during the event was the lack of action at the local level between agencies and headquarters. The local RFS brigades were left out of the loop in many cases, needs to focus on the local trust.</p>

## Community Support Skills Training

Neal advised that at the recent meeting of the Mid North Coast Health & Wellbeing Sub Committee there was a discussion in relation to this training. A representative from Coffs Harbour City Council provided information about some mental health awareness training that they attended and advised that the event was positive. He suggested that we could hold sessions within our communities.

Kylie advised that in her previous role she presented this training and it took approximately 1½ hours for each session. It assisted participants to identify when someone needs help and who to refer them to. The training is available free of charge, they just need to provide a venue and arrange for participants to attend. Kylie will provide a flyer for distribution to the group. Janine is able to facilitate in scheduling sessions if required.

Sharon suggested that the members of the reference group attend a session.

Paul asked the group, that in terms of this group with regards to support skills that the members have, how are you finding it and is there any additional support you required to assist you in your communities. Does any of the members of the group need support in this space, as Council understands the additional burden on each member as leaders of your communities.

Peter requested that if Council officers are made aware of any residents that need a chat please refer to local community representatives.

Mike advised that currently community members are unaware of how to contact members on the group as there isn't any contact details on the website.

**Actions:** Michelle to include contact details for reference group members on Council's website page.

Janine to include member details in the next Bushfire newsletter.

Sharon suggested an informal meeting or focus groups to discuss matters on a monthly basis to allow affected residents to chat more openly. Janine advised that she is able to assist in setting up a network.

Trypheyne requested that further information be made available for the public about the Reference Group that allows them have a better understanding of how it works and how they can contact the relevant members.

Paul advised that Council currently has a webpage which outlines the reference group and its members but we can add additional information and promote the page to the community.

Peter advised that currently the webpage shows 125 homes destroyed but to date there has only been 30 development applications been approved. He suggested the community representatives may need to chat to residents in their area to see if they know what the process is to rebuild.

Paul advised that when the recovery team first meet it was discussed that Council didn't expect all 125 homes to be rebuilt through the Council system, they expected that there would be approximately 50% that would go through the Council process. Council expected that there would be several people that will choose not to rebuild and several people that would follow an unlawful process in rebuilding.

### **Discussion re activities/events in communities prior to Christmas**

Neal advised that he believes in informality and would like the group to come up with some cost effective events for the community and what support is available to arrange and promote the events.

Janine advised that we have received some funding for pizza nights in the community for seven locations, as Upper Lansdowne, Bobin and Killabakh received funding for their own events. She can assist communities with promotion of any events arranged by the community.

Paul suggested that the group needs to clarify the type and style of an event ie general social events, Christmas based events and the essentially memorial events. Some communities are keen to look at memorial events but other areas won't be.

Neal suggested we could arrange events around preparedness and request assistance from the RFS or SES or other agencies.

Sharon advised that RFS are running a preparedness weekend this week, over two days and are being held in local areas. Before any events are arranged we need to address COVID restrictions to ensure an event is conducted appropriately. She advised that most affected residents prefer to have general catch ups with people that assisted them or people they meet on a social level.

Paul advised that NSW Health has released exemptions for bushfire recovery events and need to follow the 1 person per four square metres.

Mike has concerns with events in the community that include higher risk categories, too many people aren't following COVID requirements and restrictions. He doesn't want to put people at risk attending events. They have cancelled the fireworks and Christmas carols in Harrington due to large attendance numbers.

Paul agrees cancelling large events, ie fireworks and carols as they attract people from outside of our region. But due to no current known cases in our area, it is little chance of people contracting COVID locally at this stage. All events need to follow a COVID safety plan and the four square metre ruling is set. The real risk is bringing people from outside our area into the community.

Peter advised that in Rainbow Flat they are looking at a community gathering on 8 November 2020. They will be speaking with Police with regards to the event due to the possible numbers attending. If the event goes ahead they will be inviting residents from both Possum Brush and Failford areas.

Paul advised that Police would be happy to assist, as long as the COVID safety plan is followed in a recovery space. The only issue is if someone in the community has been outside the area and contracted the virus and then attends the event, it is social responsibility of wants happens.

Daintry advised that each community will need to arrange their own event so that it can focus on the needs of the community, whether that be a social event or discussions re fire preparedness.

## General Business

Mark advised that the Lakesway Musical Festival was due to be held the first Saturday of November but they have decided not to hold the event this year. He acknowledged the assistance that the Council events team had provided the Festival.

Lindsay advised that she had received a phone call today from Council officer Murray Bowland regarding the community hall audit. She advised that they had a good discussion and that he was very helpful.

Paul advised that all community halls will be contacted. They are initially looking at the existing halls and Council's audit to see what upgrades are required. Then will be talking to the communities to see what they want and then speaking to the local RFS to see what has to be done to make the halls neighbourhood safer places for future emergencies. Once all information is collected Council will have a better idea of what needs to be done. He further advised that places that don't have halls, they are looking at creating halls for meeting/gathering places that are critically located. The issue of COVID requirements will have to be addressed in the case of an emergency.

Bettina advised that she will provide a copy of Red Cross' COVID 19 Supplement to the Evacuation Management Guidelines.

Trypheyne understands the need for neighbourhood safer places and evacuation centres but referred to situations where residents fighting to keep their properties had to leave to get certain requirements eg fuel but on return Police wouldn't permit them to return to their property. RFS understood the importance of residents returning to their properties. In some instances, residents are safer on their property are being forced to leave their property. There needs be further information provided to allow people on the ground to have a better understanding what is required of them to be able to protect their property.

Paul advised that this space is essential to preparedness, as when a Section 44 emergency is called the local Police Commander take control of the event. The issue is to ensure that preparedness space that people have enough supplies and resources to defend their property. The Local Emergency Management Plan works, if you don't have all this in place and you aren't prepared you need to vacate your property. The issue of preparedness needs to be addressed going forward.

Mike agrees that discussion regarding evacuation plans needs to be discussed further and needs to be more clarity on evacuation points.

Sharon advised that the evacuation of animals need to be addressed and included in any evacuation plan. Paul agreed and advised that no formal documents recognise animals.

Jenny advised that there was an issue at Wallabi Point during the event as to where to meet when evacuating properties, as the designated place was the headland but due to heavy smoke this wasn't an option and there wasn't any other plan. Also, there was a back road being used by residents to get supplies which was dangerous, she suggests that the road needs to be made legal as a second exit or food supplies provided by other means ie boat.

Daniel raised an issue with evacuation areas, Gloucester was on the western side of the fires and people were travelling through the fires to access evacuation centres in Wingham and Taree. He suggested that there should have been

	<p>evacuation centres officially set up on the western side of the fires to allow residents to access more safely. Local Land Service had prepared an animal evacuation centre but no place for people.</p> <p>Paul proposed that he will invite the LEMO officer and the new LEOCON to next the next meeting to receive an understanding of the issues being raised by group.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Paul invite LEMO and LEOCON to next meeting.</p> <p>Bettina suggested that the Red Cross be invited to attend the next meeting to provide their position during emergencies.</p> <p>Meeting finished at 6.34pm</p>
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## Next meeting

Date	13 October 2020	Time	5pm
Venue	Zoom		

## Record of actions

Date of meeting	Action	Responsible officer	Status
23 June 2020			
	Group members provide summary of themselves	All	Progressing
7 July 2020			
	Possibility of letterbox drop	Paul	Completed – 25/8/20
	Options available to allow process of property owner details more efficient for bushfire landowners	Paul	Completed – 25/8/20
	Creation of categories for group to provide feedback on issues	Paul	Completed – 25/8/20
25 August 2020			
	Group members to provide a list of actions/issues	All	Progressing
	Invite LEMO to future meeting	Paul	
15 September 2020			
	Invite LEOCOM to next meeting	Paul	
	Add contact details for Reference Group members on Council's website page	Michelle	
	Details of Reference Group members be included in the next Bushfire newsletter	Janine	
	Paul invite LEMO and LEOCON to next meeting	Paul	