

Meeting notes

Community Recovery Bushfire Reference Group

Date	25 August 2020	Time	2.30pm
Venue	Zoom	Chair	Mayor David West
		Note-taker	Michelle Jobson
Attendance	Mayor David West, Paul De Szell, Janine Freidrich, Carly Landers, Daniel Trudgeon, Mike Parsons, Danitry Gerrand, Greg Hale, Kim MacDonald, Lindsay Segal, Neal Parker, Bettina Bettington, Kylie Atkinson, Mark Johnson, Sharon Chamberlain, Trypheyne McShane, Alastair Breingan & Linda MacKenzie.		
Apologies	Deputy Mayor Claire Pontin, Bree Katsamangos, Lucinda Fischer, Peter Ruprecht, Sandra Zielke, Adam Parish & Jenny Brewer		

Meeting items

Item	Key points/actions
1	Acknowledgement of Country
2	<p>Presentation – Liz Parker (Early Childhood Australia) & Chloe Ryan (Headspace)</p> <p>Chloe provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining The Bushfire Response Program (copy is attached). Liz & Chloe are the Contact Liaison Officers for the program. Liz works with Early Childhood Australia and will be contacting local early learning services over coming weeks to offer their assistance.</p> <p>Chloe responded to a few questions from the group.</p> <p>Kylie will link Chloe with their school link coordinator. She advised that they have been closed out of schools and teachers are not permitted to attend training due to COVID. The Department of Education Schools aren't permitting external parties into schools. They have two funded positions to assist the youth (14-25 age range) with mental health education. She advised that mental health is available for all residents including fire fighters that were affected by the fires.</p> <p>Kylie advised that there are resources available and that there are some service providers that meet regularly to discuss issues. It will continue and are looking at ways going forward.</p> <p>Daniel advised that LLS are currently running a program for children, a writing competition around fire preparedness. He advised that Old Bar Early Learning Centre created a book with ideas and pictures after the fire that may assist. If people are interested in the book they can contact the Learning Centre.</p>

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	<p>Trypheyne advised that she was scheduled to work with kids at Old Bar After School program on creating canvas painting. However due to COVID the program was cancelled. She would like to assist in this area to allow children to express themselves creatively.</p> <p>Sharon advised that they are in negotiations with Save the Children to have a 16-25 year-old youth group to include youth workers which will visit areas from Bobin to Tinonee and out to Wherrol Flat.</p> <p>Greg advised that there are three phases of bushfire for children and adults being the build-up, then the event (trauma) and then recovery. We need to acknowledge all areas can be impacted by fire.</p> <p>Paul reminded that there were areas that didn't sustain physical damage but were surrounded by the fire, these areas need to be included as residents were traumatised.</p>
3	<p>Presentation – Kirsty Channon (NSW RFS) – Fire Preparedness</p> <p>Kirsty provided a PowerPoint presentation (copy attached). She advised that the bush fire danger period commences 1 September 2020 for the MidCoast Council area. There is now an online notification portal through RFS website which allows residents to notify of any burning off being undertaken on their property. At this point of time the details aren't available to the public. She advised that the Fires Near Me application is the best option to see where any fires are burning.</p> <p>She advised that Fire & Rescue NSW are located in Forster/Tuncurry, Taree and Tea Gardens and residents are required to have a burning off permit 365 days a year (urban areas). Outside these areas Rural Fire Service manages and only require a fire permit during bush fire danger periods. If you visit the online notification portal and submit an address that is located in the Fire & Rescue area, it will redirect the resident to their website. Residents can call during office hours if they don't have access to the internet, however currently due to COVID the offices are closed on weekends.</p> <p>Kim advised Kirsty that the website still states 1 October 2020 for the commencement of the bush fire danger period not 1 September 2020. Kirsty will update the details.</p> <p>Kirsty advised that the "Get Ready Weekend" preparedness program will be held on 19/20 September 2020, they currently have 22 fire brigades from the MidCoast Council area have registered to hold events with reduced numbers and social distancing with COVID. This program is an opportunity for residents to approach the them.</p> <p>Paul advised that Council are registered for the program, which includes starter kits to be distributed to residents.</p> <p>Mark advised that the slab for the Rainbow Flat Fire Station has been poured today.</p> <p>Kirsty advised that the weather outlook is a La Nina, which will bring warmer nights with higher average rainfall over coming months. However, the current weather has delayed with hazard reduction program. They have approximately 700 new members joined up with online training to be able to respond for next season. They have been delivering the secondary high school cadet program at Wingham High</p>

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	<p>School and Great Lakes College which provides awareness to school children to share with families and communities.</p> <p>Paul advised that there are a lot of expectations from the local communities that the RFS will be out on the ground trying to educate residents but unfortunately they don't have the capacity to do so. Kirsty advised that residents can approach the RFS at any stage for assistance, however, with COVID it has challenged them this season.</p> <p>Greg advised that RFS has created Community Liaison Officers for each brigade and training will be held this weekend.</p> <p>Bettina attended a meeting of the Red Cross Emergency Response regarding preparedness, one particular discussion related to the changes to the organisation of evacuation centres due to COVID. She advised that we need some focus on preparedness when an emergency situation occurs and so that residents know what to do.</p>
4	<p>Gloucester Business Chamber meeting update</p> <p>Daniel advised that he attended a Chamber meeting in Gloucester to get a better understanding of what the community needs and in particular local businesses. He advised that they spoke about positive outcomes as well as negative. The positive outcomes included the promotion of the area by Council advising that the Gloucester area was still open for visitors. The area saw a role for local community radio stations during fires. They have requested that charities not too bring too much supplies as they take local business away.</p> <p>Paul advised that Council is launching the #shopmidcoast initiative that helps small businesses in the Local Government area. Further information is available on Council's website.</p> <p>Daniel advised that another major outcome was a discussion regarding the need for a mentoring program for businesses so that they can prepare for downturn in business during unprecedented emergencies.</p>
5	<p>Agreed actions – discussion</p> <p>Daniel requested that the group create an agreed action list which will assist the members on gathering information from their communities and the provide a summary/list of actions to the group.</p> <p>Paul agreed that the more information we can feedback to the group, the more can be feed back to the community and these actions will assist Council. He advised that to date there hasn't been any expectations from the group but moving forward when we delivery more preparedness information and more resources become available with the recruitment of the Community Recovery Officers they will play a more active role in this space which will benefit the group.</p>
6	<p>Meetings – commencement times</p> <p>Daniel has requested if the commencement times for the meeting can be revisited to allow people working to attend meetings without having to leave work early.</p> <p>The group agreed to commence the next meeting at 5pm and see how it goes.</p>

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7	<p>“Problems” – what went wrong last summer</p> <p>Alastair agreed that we need to put a list together to assist in solving some issues.</p> <p>Paul requested that all group members forward a list of any specific issues to Michelle as this will allow us to raise the issues with various agencies. The list will also allow the group to get a better understanding and he will invite the LEMO to a future meeting to advise of the processes to assist the group and how it all works.</p> <p>Action: Group members to provide a list of actions/issues (things that did and didn't work) to Michelle by the next meeting for collation. The list can include issues from all emergencies ie fires, severe storms, floods etc</p> <p>Action: Paul to invite LEMO to future meeting.</p> <p>Greg advised that he completed an action review after the fire event which consisted of 12 pages. The event was an emergency that we haven't experienced in the entire area. He advised that there needs to be better coordination of major services to assist with any disaster.</p> <p>Paul advised that there were issues with state emergency systems and processes during the event. There are a lot of broader issues that this group may not be able to address but we can raise awareness at a higher level. However, looking at a positive we manage flood management well due to multiple events but fires like we had we don't have the same learnings. We all need to learn and better manage next time.</p> <p>Greg appreciated Council's assistance in the time of the emergency and all communities need to become more knowledgeable and ask for assistance when required.</p>
8	<p>General Business</p> <p>David thanked the group members for participating in the meetings.</p> <p>Daintry requested assistance from Council with a letter box drop in the Johns River area to provide information to fire affected residents.</p> <p>Daintry advised that the MidCoast Tops Landcare Connection are organising a fire hot spots program with assistance from the RFS to include information on preparedness for fire protection and environmental management. They held a meeting last week to plan where the priority unburnt areas are located and which are considered a priority by RFS. It was decided to do the program in the Topi Topi Bungwahl area.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 4.20pm</p>

Next meeting

Date	15 September 2020	Time	5pm
Venue	Zoom		

Record of actions

Date of meeting	Action	Responsible officer	Status
23 June 2020			
	Model/Framework on agenda for next meeting	Michelle	Completed
	Copy of Newsletter distributed to group	Janine	Completed
	Group members provide summary of themselves	All	Progressing
7 July 2020			
	Possibility of letterbox drop	Paul	
	Options available to allow process of property owner details more efficient for bushfire landowners	Paul	
	Creation of categories for group to provide feedback on issues	Paul	
28 July 2020			
	Paul to invite Steve Farrell to present to Group	Paul	Completed
	Membership contact list to be distributed to group	Michelle	Completed
	Copy of Technical note from RFS re BAL capping be distributed to group	Michelle	Completed
25 August 2020			
	Group members to provide a list of actions/issues	All	
	Invite LEMO to future meeting	Paul	