

Community Recovery Bushfire Reference Group

Date	28 July 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, Kim MacDonald, Sandra Zielke, Lucinda Fischer, Bettina Bettington, Jenny Brewer, Bree Katsamangos, Kylie Atkinson, Mark Johnson, Peter Ruprecht, Sharon Chamberlain, Alastair Breingan & Linda MacKenzie.		
Apologies	Deputy Mayor Claire Pontin, Greg Hal, Trypheyne McShane, Lindsay Segal, Adam Parish & Neal Parker		

Meeting items

Item	Key points/actions
1	Acknowledgement of Country
2	<p>RFS debriefing & Preparedness for Communities</p> <p>Kim advised that they have had some contact from RFS regarding visits to the local communities to discuss fire preparedness leading into the summer but she advised them that they haven't had any de-brief after the event. She wanted to know if any other communities have had any contact with RFS and in particular any de-briefing or any preparedness for the upcoming summer.</p> <p>Paul advised that Council hasn't been contacted by RFS regarding discussions for preparedness. He also advised that Council requested de-briefing sessions after the event but didn't receive any response from the RFS. He agrees that a de-briefing is required before the communities can commence their preparedness for the upcoming season.</p> <p>Alastair advised that Lansdowne RFS has organised a visit to the Upper Lansdowne area on 9 August 2020 and that this was organised by the brigade and will be run by the Captains & Deputy Captains.</p> <p>Linda advised that the Wherrol Flat Brigade had a debrief with the brigade after the fires but haven't been able to meet again due to COVID. The brigade has just recommenced meetings.</p> <p>Lucinda requested if Alastair can speak to other local brigades in the area to arrange visits to the communities. She also referred to the hot spots program that the RFS run and that Daintry is trying to organise from a Landcare perspective.</p>

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	<p>Alastair advised that he could speak to local brigades but the preferred option would be that district RFS to arrange something more central. He also advised that the RFS after action reviews were disrupted and haven't really in his view happened correctly and is looking to see some action in this area.</p> <p>Paul advised that he has requested Council's Local Emergency Management Officer to contact the district office to arrange a coordinated approach.</p> <p>Action: Paul to invite Steve Farrell to present to the group</p> <p>Sharon advised that there needs to greater education on the actual safe emergency evacuation points and there isn't many and preparedness is essential.</p> <p>Paul advised that there are two spaces being either an emergency evacuation points or a neighbour safer places (listed on RFS website).</p> <p>Bree suggested on the chat room that the development of home preparedness community education sessions and a public education campaign in the lead up to summer would be useful.</p> <p>Paul displayed two documents on his screen that Council are looking in developing a community education tool for the MidCoast area. The ACT model is what Council are reviewing but any document created will be provided to the RFS for comment.</p> <p>Alastair advised they preparedness has been a hot topic and is disappointed with the lack of information available, however the RFS has a good website which provides a set of questions that assists you in considering to leave your property or not. He has been receiving requests in relation to sprinkle on houses but there is little public information available except on supplier's website. He suggested that it would be useful to have a group which involves members from RFS, tradespersons and sprinkle manufacturer to develop a system that is affordable to the community.</p> <p>Sharon advised she has been researching fire trailers for residents and has found a supplier which offers a good price for bulk supplies.</p> <p>Daintry advised that through the Landcare networks they have received grants to assist with the hotspots programs with the RFS which assists with preparedness by involving landowners by looking at diversity and fire protection. There have been three programs allocated for the upcoming 12 months in our region. It is suggested that Landcare add components onto the RFS hot spots programs.</p> <p>Alastair advised that hot spots program is suitable for larger land holders as it goes through the types of vegetation on your land and basically how often you would want to burn various bits of vegetation. It isn't so much around preparedness in protection your house.</p>
3	<p>Functionality & overall goals of the group</p> <p>Paul advised that we have discussed this item over the past meetings and requested Lucinda to raise her concerns.</p> <p>Lucinda concerns are how we most effectively coordinate what is happening within the group ie sub groups or a regular catch up.</p>

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	<p>Paul referred to the TOR which focuses on the general chat process whereby the information is distributed amongst the network which includes presentations from external parties eg RFS which then can be distributed to the various communities being represented by the group. It is the decision of the group which way the group wants to head, as we don't want to replicate what other groups are currently managing.</p> <p>Jenny suggested that a list of members including contact numbers would be useful for the group to contact each other.</p> <p>Action: Michelle is to be distribute a contact list</p> <p>Bettina in relation to coordinating and providing a focus for the group was wondering about when Resilience NSW and the Recovery position will be working closely together to develop what Council thinks should be the focus of the activity – maybe the focus of this group be clarified when they have considered a plan for the function of Council in this space.</p> <p>Paul referred to Bree's comment in the chat room being that she sees the value in the group providing feedback to Council's work, based on the feedback the group have from the community and aiding Council in disseminating information to the respective communities.</p> <p>Daniel advised that he has commenced arranging meeting in the Gloucester community, starting with the business community to discuss the impacts and what businesses would like to see with regards to preparedness. He sees this as the group's role by getting feedback from the community and providing update to the group.</p> <p>Daintry referred to previous discussions that the Recovery officer would be able to work with the members of the group to assist in building relationships in the communities and be able to assist with resource support.</p> <p>Paul advised that this is correct however the position is being readvertised.</p> <p>Mike referred to the many variables in the community and it currently appears that the focus is on rural land holdings where as he is interested in ingress and egress, escape plans and evacuation plans for residents in urban village areas. As many residents were unaware of other ways out when main road was closed. He would like some focus directed towards village areas which tend to be isolated and not be provided with sufficient information.</p> <p>Paul advised that there is a Regional Disaster Preparedness Program that is currently being undertaken through the Joint Organisations of Councils and he completed an interview with Elton Consulting earlier today. We need to ensure that all areas are treated separately and we require flexibility for the communities, as one model isn't suitable for all areas.</p>
4	<p>Distribution of information from Regional Recovery process</p> <p>Paul advised that the Regional Recovery process is run on a sound model which has been previously used in recovery with a number of different committees in that space and it has been raised by Lucinda about the distribution of information from that space. He advised that the space is winding back in some areas, including fewer committee meetings and therefore there is very little information to be</p>

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	<p>distributed. He has spoken to Ross O'Shea recently who advised that they still want us in the space but are winding back due the varies agencies essentially pulling away which will just leave Resilience NSW and not sure how long they will be around.</p> <p>Lucinda requested if the information received from the various meetings can be distributed to the group.</p> <p>Paul will speak to the various members within Council that are represented on the committees.</p>
5	<p>Gaps in recovery – is Council & Resilience NSW receiving feedback from Red Cross re their outreach calls</p> <p>Janine advised that Council haven't received any feedback for over a month but she has contacted Red Cross requesting an update date. We are still waiting on a final report.</p> <p>Sharon advised that Red Cross and Resilience NSW (Ruth) will be conducting door knocking in the hard to reach areas. They are still capturing people who haven't received any assistance.</p> <p>Paul advised that Ross O'Shea is aware of the huge gaps in processes and that many people are falling into the gaps but unsure who is responsible to plug the gaps. The gaps are mostly related to funding and relief which is potentially leading to emotionally scars by feeling abandoned by falling into these gaps.</p> <p>The Mayor referred to too many organisations reinventing the wheel with no one talking to each other and until we overcome this situation we can't move forward. That is the importance of this group reaching a goal at the end to create a footprint for us all to walk within.</p> <p>Bettina advised that the feedback from the phone calls there is a lot of people not being able to receive support they require. The feedback goes to the Red Cross and they are passing the information onto their channels. There is no end date of following up with people and are working with Resilience NSW.</p> <p>Lucinda referred to a resident who fell through the gaps who had contacted relevant agencies but received a lack of follow up information. She wanted to know how these people are being referred for assistance.</p> <p>Sharon advised that these gaps are being picked up by working with several agencies and networks. They provide regular follow ups with clients and refer any of them to other agencies.</p> <p>Bettina agreed that when gaps are being identified in phone calls they are referred to the relevant agencies for assistance.</p> <p>Janine referred to the issue of data privacy and details unable to be shared. The other issue is validating claims and some agencies have more resources to assist with the claims. Some claims are taking too long to validate which is delaying the process and becoming frustrating for both claimant and staff.</p> <p>Paul advised that there are three categories that we need to focus on being those that are well known but don't fit into any category, those that are known but are</p>

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	<p>struggling in the space and falling into the gaps and people are wanting to come forward now and are unknown to us and have missed on multiple opportunities.</p> <p>Mark is concerned that there is no definite list of residents who has losses in the community from the fires. The RFS or Council must have details of the houses burnt.</p> <p>Paul explained how it worked, post bushfire event all details from RFS were collated into a list into a program NSW State Government GIS program called Fulcrum. What was known to be destroyed by RFS essentially logged into there, what we have found that there are many buildings that were burnt that were not known at the time, especially in remote areas. In some areas there are clearer records than others due to no records indicating a building on the property. There is a system in place but it isn't accurate.</p> <p>Lucinda referred to Bree's chat room message being that there should be a primary agency for referrals needs to be selected ie Red Cross and they need to refer on to extended networks/agencies. Council's website where relief information is gathered needs to be shared with people who do not know what is available. The website needs to ensure that it is updated. People in need of intensive counselling support should be referred to Health NSW providers as a priority response.</p> <p>Sharon advised that Department Primary Industries (DPI) assist with referrals and welfare checks.</p> <p>Paul referred to the chat room which is showing that Service NSW is the main referral agency, DPI and Resilience NSW assist them but Service NSW distribute referrals.</p> <p>Sandra advised that there are people not on social media and they don't attend community meeting and would benefit receiving any information from the group.</p> <p>Janine advised the list only includes damaged structures and the issues relating to loss of fences, rates relief etc hasn't been captured anywhere and is difficult to capture. The Council were investigating the possibility of a letterbox drop to distribute the Bushfire Recovery newsletter to affected areas to attempt to capture more people.</p> <p>Paul advised that Trypheyne suggested a letterbox drop at the last meeting and we are still investigating as we don't want to letterbox drop broadly enough to people that won't read the newsletter.</p> <p>Daintry referred to the Service NSW being the central point of contact but with the understanding that some residents are contacting Resilience Officers directly, hoping that all the information collated is being done at one point.</p> <p>Lucinda believes that this isn't happening as there are too many parts with different groups and agencies but residents thinking that they were placed on such a list for follow up. Some residents who contacted the relevant agencies after the fire event weren't originally eligible funding but have become eligible for support and thought that they were placed on a list for further contact if any assistance became available for them.</p> <p>Paul agreed with Lucinda that it is a reactive space where residents need to be react for support and not a proactive space where agencies are following up with</p>

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	<p>residents that need assistance. It would be more affective is it was a pro-active space would be more beneficial for the community.</p> <p>Carly advised that as part of the Regional Disaster Preparedness Program interview with Elton Consulting that her feedback was the future events a data system needs to be place so that all relevant data is collated in one area. There should be technology available to be able to coordinate a single database to enable all relevant agencies to access to minimise gaps in the systems.</p> <p>Paul advised that State level agencies have recognised that there were failures in the processes but they are unable to fix these failures now.</p> <p>Daintry agrees that a central data base/resource is important to assist with following up residents. It isn't just about people who lost their homes but also a lot of landholders who suffered loss of infrastructure, however there are more opportunities coming through now for assistance. The group needs to think how we can support a central information system to ensure that all affected residents are included.</p> <p>Peter referred to Sharon's advice of upcoming door knocking by agencies and suggested that a letter with contact details be left for property owners who don't reside at their properties and may not be aware of services available. He advised Sharon that Chris Scollen has been negotiating with distributors and manufacturers for consistency with fire pumps and hoses across the local government area and will provide his contact details. He further advised that many residents are unaware that most public liability insurance only last six (6) months after their home has been written off, most need to be aware that any volunteer groups entering your property won't be covered for public liability. He asked if it is possible to have a list of lost homes that have got a bushfire attack level of flame zone to ensure that residents are contacted and supported.</p> <p>Paul advised that we are unable to provide a list of flame zones as until a site inspection is carried out the zone level isn't determined. There are too many variables in determining a flame zone. He further advised that a technical note from RFS has been received which outlines updates with regards to BAL capping.</p> <p>Action: A copy of the technical note be distributed to the group.</p> <p>Sharon advised that there are many residents find it difficult to ask for support and assistance, however they are attempting to create ways for these residents to come into the outreach centre to socialise and when they are ready they will ask for assistance.</p>
6	<p>Green/Bulky waste collection</p> <p>Paul advised the group that report is being prepared for the Council meeting to be held on 26 August 2020 addressing an interim solution around bulky waste and at this time isn't able to further discuss until the report is considered by Council. He advised that after the fire event Council decided to assist the residents with allowing them to dump free of charge any green waste at the landfills. However then COVID stopped the bulky waste collection.</p> <p>Lucinda requested that there be some consideration given to bushfire affected properties as a preference to assist with the clean-up of green and bulky waste. As</p>

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	<p>many properties were still burning when the free green waste dumping was available.</p> <p>Paul advised that if all residents with green waste brought it to the landfills it would be unmanageable and the preference is that residents burn the green waste on their properties if they can.</p> <p>Lucinda suggested that if green waste could be capped per property holder with a voucher or alternatively could Council consider having a budget to remove dangerous trees located on private properties.</p> <p>Janine advised that Council received many queries for the removal of dangerous trees and had been looking at BackTracks organisation to assist property owners but due to the involved process haven't been able to complete a case to lodge with them. This issue will be distributed to the Recovery officer once they are employed.</p> <p>Lucinda requested that any available funding be made available to assist with the removal of dangerous trees.</p> <p>Linda advised that there are several dangerous trees located on the roadside in Caparra and Wherrol Flat that need to be removed.</p> <p>Paul referred to tree management across the LGA, all areas except road reserves are within his directorate and that at this point is entirely contracted out so he doesn't have a tree management team on staff and this has been discussed with management team. The issue with contractors is that they are unable to enter private land and who procures the work. In relation to the dangerous trees on the road reserve, RFS identified a few trees and he isn't sure of the contracting arrangements but there have been some issues with the process.</p> <p>Alastair referred to the issue of road closures in rural areas is tricky and when the Council closed roads in the Upper Lansdowne area it was ignored by many residents as unlike a village situation where all residents leave, rural land holders would go to their properties during the day and leaving at night. The issue of safety on the roads was discussed due to fallen trees and certainly could be something Council could look at in terms of responding to these situations as RFS didn't have the resources to undertake this work.</p> <p>Paul advised that it is a misunderstood space in emergencies as Council is the authority for the closing of roads in normal situations however when the Section 44 emergency call was called these powers were removed from Council and transferred to the LECOM who is the head of the local Police. They instruct Council to close roads and Council have to close the roads. This issue needs to be discussed in any de-briefing process.</p> <p>Alastair suggested that the community halls should be used for control and information point.</p>
7	<p>General Business</p> <p>Sharon advised that Tinonee Outreach are creating a youth group with the youth leading it. She is welcome to any input from the group.</p> <p>Kylie advised that within the health and wellbeing space that there has been a surge of people visiting this space. She would like to collate who is doing what and</p>

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	<p>to be connected with other groups. She has been recently contacted by an agency who are focussing on early childhood centres and the bushfire response.</p> <p>Bettina advised that there are services available for school aged children from various agencies.</p> <p>The frequency of meetings was discussed and agreed that they will be held every three (3) weeks.</p> <p>Michelle advised the group that a Microsoft Teams hub is being created which will provide access for the group to view various documents. The hub will be managed by Council and email will be forwarded to the team inviting them to join.</p>

Next meeting

Date	25 August 2020	Time	2.30pm
Venue	Zoom		