

Meeting notes

Community Recovery Bushfire Reference Group

Date	7 July 2020	Time	2.30pm
Venue	Zoom	Chair	Mayor David West
		Note-taker	Michelle Jobson
Attendance	Mayor David West, Deputy Mayor Claire Pontin, Paul De Szell, Carly Landers, Daniel Trudgeon, Mike Parsons, Danitry Gerrand, Greg Hale, Kim MacDonald, Lindsay Segal, Neal Parker, Bettina Bettington, Bree Katsamangos, Mark Johnson, Peter Ruprecht, Sharon Chamberlain, Trypheyne McShane & Alastair Breingan.		
Apologies	Jenny Brewer, Sandra Zielke, Kylie Atkinson, Lucinda Fischer, Adam Parish, Janine Friedrich & Linda MacKenzie.		

Meeting items

Item	Key points/actions
1	Acknowledgement of Country
2	<p>Update – Summary detailing progress over the last 6 months & plan for further 6 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bushfire specific positions- what roles are being filled Recruitment for the Community Recovery Officer closed on 2 July 2020. This position is Government funded and a position description was provided with the funding. The position will report to the Manager Libraries, Chris Jones. Another position will be advertised to fill the vacancy of the Bushfire Recovery Officers which are currently filled by Janine & Carly. The role of Resilience NSW and the national bushfire recovery agency moving forward Council are unsure what the role entails in long term moving forward. There has been some funding transferred to Council. Current employee contracts with Resilience NSW are due to end around August. There will have to be a changeover to enable this to happen. Resilience building, regeneration and preparedness initiatives Council's LEMO officer, Manager Engagement, Communication and Education and Director Liveable Communities have just commenced working with Hunter Councils in the resilience area. Council is to be debriefed from State level. The next 6 months will be focussed on resilience. Funding strategy reported to Council

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	<p>A copy of the report adopted at the Council meeting on 13 May 2020 was provided to the group members along with a copy of the Council resolution.</p> <p>Sharon referred to the State Government funding provides building maintenance for community halls and enquired if the community halls will be included in the funding.</p> <p>Paul advised that the community halls refurbishment will be included within the initial funding received which was outlined in the Council report. A visible audit of the 47 community halls has been completed. The next step will be Council contacting the relevant hall representatives to discuss what is required in each hall to make their hall more manageable. Then all responses will be combined and a program will be created outlining the requirements.</p> <p>Council will be facilitating the works and all the halls will be available for any future emergencies either as an evacuation centre or a neighbourhood safe place.</p> <p>Council has been focusing on the processors of building in the first six months to ensure that systems are in place and is now focussing on resilience and preparedness for the next six months.</p> <p>Trypheyra advised that we need to more inclusive for people without technology and suggested that Council provide letterbox drops to ensure that affected residents receive the relevant information.</p> <p>Carly advised that the Newsletter is being distributed to all residents which were included on the spreadsheet provided by Public Works for damaged and destroyed properties. It is currently being distributed by either email or hard copy post. Residents can view a copy of the Newsletter on Council's website and can also request a copy.</p> <p>Action: Paul to discuss possibility of letterbox drops with Manager Engagement, Communication and Education, Marcelle Boyling.</p> <p>Paul reminder the group that Council has a Recovery page on our website which contains a variety of information to assist other agencies and the public.</p> <p>Bree advised that it will be difficult to capture every person and the group needs to design a multi facet approach to getting the communication out there. For this to work effectively we need individual communities to develop networks. Also with regards to the current website, it requires an image on the top of the page to gain better engagement.</p> <p>Trypheyra advised that many property owners that are attempting to contact neighbouring owners for fencing issues are finding it difficult to gain the details of the owners due to privacy reasons.</p> <p>Action: Paul to research options available to allow this process to be more efficient.</p> <p>Peter advised the LLS can assist with locating the ownership details of straying cattle.</p>
3	<p>Expectations & Operational guidelines for the group</p> <p>Bettina shared her thoughts of the need for guidelines for the group so that it would assist the group on what the roles of different individuals and organisations are and to be better prepared for the future. She suggested that we may need a more structured approach to allow the group to target more of the community so that we can get a better understanding of what works and what doesn't work.</p>

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	<p>Paul advised that is wasn't what the group was designed to do but there are similar structures that exist at a higher level but most are missing the community aspect. This group needs to test what we are doing with the community to make sure that it does have relevance and hits the mark.</p> <p>Daniel suggests that this forum needs to focus on what this group is for as we are a community reference group so we need to focus on what we can help the community and make a difference with spreading information.</p> <p>Paul agreed and reiterated the purpose of this group is to assist our community in recovery. The group needs to manage issues that Council can assist with resolving or issues that another agency can assist.</p> <p>Bree advised that we have learnt a lot about the bushfires and our response out of the Victorian Bushfires, so there is some evidence base on what works and what doesn't and we need to privy to that but also need to reflect when Council does implement processors. The group needs to support the new positions. Also the group needs to spend some time unpacking this information and understand the limits of our achievements.</p> <p>Paul requested that the members of the group read the Terms of Reference as it outlines what the role of the group and agrees that the group needs to support the new positions and Council.</p> <p>Due to COVID restrictions we all understand that it has been difficult to engage with the community which has held back recovery of some of the areas.</p> <p>Paul advised that recovery takes time and COVID has created some additional issues with the recovery space. The process is a long haul scenario and results will take time. We need to learn lessons from other areas and focus on step by step outcomes.</p> <p>Paul referred to Bree's comment on the chat room being:</p> <p>It is important this group is informed in two ways, looking at the evidence base for what works including the risk and protective factors in building resilient communities AND understanding the experience of the people in our communities and being able to reflect back to Council how effectively its evidence based actions are being applied. How confident are we that we understand these things and does Council as facilitators need to spend some time building the capacity of this group to perform its function effectively?</p> <p>Greg & Alastair suggested that the members of the group gather information from their communities to assist the group with resolving future issues. Some issues are multi agency issues but someone needs to manage them.</p> <p>Action:: Paul to chat with Michelle to create some categories which then will be sent to the group to seek feedback on issues.</p>
4	<p>Memorial Services/Anniversary of fire events</p> <p>Paul advised that Council had received some information from Resilience NSW regarding memorial services/anniversary of fire events. Council has no plans but if any communities wish to arrange an event they can contact Resilience NSW for assistance but also advise Council of the event.</p>

Item	Key points/actions
	<p>It was noted that due to COVID restrictions communities haven't been able to gather for recovery events, however there is currently discussions being held to get some relaxed restrictions for these events to be held.</p> <p>Sharon suggested that the communities need to be able to gather again similar to the Community Recovery BBQs held prior to the COVID restrictions.</p> <p>Paul reiterates that the COVID restrictions have impacted the communities with the inability to talking to close friends and community. Hopefully moving forward, we will be able to get back to the same space with more community based events which will include all relevant government agencies.</p> <p>Greg advised that the Killabakh Hall Committee have been successful receiving a \$1,500 bushfire grant to run an afternoon for the community at the hall, dependant on COVID restrictions. He advised that they have an active Facebook that provides up to date information for the community which builds confidence in the community. He thanked Council for their assistance after the fires.</p> <p>Paul wanted to highlight the diversity in fire affected areas, where some communities are looking after themselves with strong community networks assisting each other. Some of the resilience is happening organically within our communities, the role of this group is to support that moving forward and to assist areas where this isn't happening to give them assistance in moving forward.</p> <p>Kim advised that their Friday night gatherings that were being held prior to COVID assisted the Bobin community and that Resilience NSW has organised a Friday night gathering to be held on 17 July 2020. The Bobin community will be arranging a gathering on 8 November to celebrate their survival after the bushfires, they are being assisted by Red Cross. They have been in touch with the RFS inviting them to the community gathering on 8 November to speak on preparedness for any future disaster events.</p>
5	<p>Model/Framework re feedback from Community</p> <p>This matter has been discussed in item 3 above.</p>
6	<p>General Business</p> <p>Sharon enquired if there is any RFS education group to attend a community based preparedness meeting.</p> <p>Greg advised that the RFS has preparedness weekend where they offer talk to communities and assist with assessing properties for preparedness. It is the role of RFS to set a platform for preparedness for the upcoming season for the communities. This includes preparing a bush fire plan.</p> <p>Paul advised that Council is looking at learning from other areas and has an example from the ACT which has an easy to read bushfire preparedness which will be implemented in the MidCoast area with consultation with the RFS. Council are also looking at a Regional Disaster Preparedness Program with Resilience NSW which is a broader program, but the timeline for this is not essentially until after the Bushfire season has commenced.</p> <p>Bettina advised that there is a community engagement officer with the RFS based in Muldoon Street Taree.</p>

Item	Key points/actions
	<p>Alastair advised that the RFS website has some good resources available for home preparedness to assist community members.</p> <p>Meeting closed 4.15pm</p>

Next meeting

Date	28 July 2020	Time	2.30pm
Venue	Zoom		