

Meeting notes

MidCoast Council Bushfire Recovery Reference Group

Date	8 June 2021	Time	5pm – 7pm
Venue	Yalawanyi Ganya	Note-taker	Gemma Cluff
Present	Mayor David West, Paul De Szell, Mike Parsons, Mark Johnson, Janine Friedrich, Gemma Cluff, Trypheyne McShane, Linda MacKenzie, Alastair Breingan, Lindsay Segal, Sharon Chamberlain, Bettina Bettington, Greg Hale, Bree Katsamangos, Kim MacDonald & Peter Hatton.		
Apologies	Chris Jones		

Meeting items

Item	Key points/actions
1	Acknowledgement of Country
2	<p>Review of action Items (see Below Table)</p> <p>Pending – Janine to organise SES member from a statutory level – addressing at local level and explaining their guidelines</p> <p>Bridge Replacement Program – Paul</p> <p>Paul - Bridge replacement program is still being completed</p> <p>Al – question on Upper Lansdowne, temporary bridge limit is 8 tonnes, trucks are still using this, such as garbage trucks</p> <p>Paul – not open to general truck</p> <p>AL – as an RFS perspective they wouldn't go over it</p> <p>Sharon – this is a constant question being asked to her, a lot of infrastructure down, time frame for those to be replaced?</p> <p>Paul – 2-year total period, to get all flood damage sorted out (roads)</p> <p>Lindsay – still have temporary bridges from previous floods, are we on schedule?</p> <p>Paul – we can track down that info (Janine)</p> <p>Halls Update</p> <p>Paul - changing project managers, been hammered with floods, wants to see actions in that halls space</p>

3

Annual summary of actions to present to Council

RFS Static Water supply Signs

Janine – Complete, have contacted the communities requesting signs

Clarification of emergency management processes in a declared disaster, understanding of how evacuation centres and arrangements for both animals and people are made

Peter – in any emergency response it is the LEOCON who runs an Emergency Operations Centre, it also their responsibility to make a request to open an evacuation centre, the request is sent through to Department Communities and Justice and an evacuation centre is then stood up. With the floods there were unregistered evacuation centres. Once official evacuation centres are stood up they are able to apply for funds to cover costs.

Paul – More often than not, with social media, you get a de facto evacuation centre opened by the community. We are not aware they have been evacuated there, then we need to retrofit.

Peter – in relation to animals, the Local Land Service will make arrangements for their care.

Sharon – In Tinonee, there was no warning, had no option other than to set up a quick evacuation centre, it was a need and necessity as there was nothing in place. Took direction from SES headquarters, completed door knocks. Had tourists trapped, hall didn't open, was hard on the ground when there was nothing there.

Paul – The way an Evacuation centre is meant to work, is that the evacuation centre is meant to feed back through to the LEOCON, who can organise DCJ persons for evacuation centre (same as Manning Point during floods, would be Heli dropped in with medical supplies). Evacuation centres are not meant to be established on their own.

Sharon – there was no other option.

Paul – Who holds the liability in a fire? Its something to be investigated

Paul - doesn't matter the type of emergency, initial communications have been a major issue. Media, LEOCON and combat agencies need to improve in this space. We need to remove people's reliance on phones and Facebook, the 'Fires app' is a great example. Be it right or wrong the best media is ABC radio

Paul – Need for informing people of type of technology to use during an emergency, we didn't have social networks established, we had a massive pull your socks up moment in MidCoast with fire, floods, plague, pandemic

AI – A blackboard outside hall for communications works well

Sharon – something like the shark alarm would be the easiest way to communicate

Paul – in densely populated area this would work, in Bobin they had a helicopter fly over doing that and no one knew what the sound was

Bree – Does council has a media strategy that might outline some of these major groups, constantly feeding into those groups, could be a range of strategies, budget to sponsor these events, critical information contained therein, developing a communication strategy and engagement strategy

Paul – we are not in charge in emergency, we are not allowed to put out media unless it's been released from LEOCON

Bree – there is still a role that we should be able to provide support

Paul – we are not allowed, we are not an official communication provider, very hierarchal system, it would be creating a public nuisance

Bree – the issue sits with them, we could feed back issues

Paul – everyone in that space has a combat agency mindset, they are not communications, they are about saving life and property, not thinking about a need for communication, a hell of a lot more to working with community, it's the beginning of a journey

Trypheyne – you will start to see communities come up with their own communications

Sharon – lucky to only have 1 death in both disasters, it comes down to communication at the state and LEOCON level, it's part of their duty of care

Greg – that strategy is only relying on information coming from RFS crews on site, did an after action review, communication raised with Fire Control Centres during fires, since that time they have issued every station an EMR radio to become part of the communication channels. This didn't happen in last fire which was dangerous, issues addressed with RFS is lack of support, only support was from Council with water and generator, through a third party. The fire ready project is part of that communication, communication starts with the Get Ready weekend, being aware up front not after the fact. Communications, going to a computer dispatch system, upgrading their communications systems and can now track trucks, know what truck is going where, who's going on it, say when you have arrived by pressing a button, trying to streamline that.

Killabakh felt very let down, without help from council we would have lost more than 9 houses. We all need to move on. We need to look at systems and have answers, have discussions, haven't had a real discussion with RFS and they are an RFS crew. People to be real about the dangers and being prepared. Having conversations to debrief and move on.

Al – we all agree that communications needs to happen from emergency services to community. One thing that council could possibly do through halls program, is having a list of names and numbers, that contact could provide information out to community

Sharon – Tinonee hall isn't a communication hub, the hall doesn't open

Paul – no one is right or wrong, 14 localities, whole community in floods to the south that haven't had their voices heard. We need a multitude of communication channels; we need to build them all together and make them work. Council can play a role in preparedness. There is an expectation from community that they will be told everything and spoon feed. We could create opportunity with education program to seek the right information

Trypheyra – being prepared for the next emergency. We are still trying to get on top of the bushfire and floods, how do we take this all on and be prepared, some communities have the means to do that and others don't

Paul – there are different abilities for each community, we are back to back in recovery space

Mike – it keeps coming back to ABC, we need the right information being fed to ABC, so they don't panic the community

Bettina – there are different issues in different locations, I'm not sure that MidCoast Council can or that its MidCoast Council's responsibility to do this, communities are so different, we shouldn't expect Council to address all those issues, Council could address individual communities, what they need to do with individual preparedness

Lobbying with Telstra to have in-person presence in MidCoast area to support the remediation of telephone services to pre-bush fire quality

Janine – to organise a separate meeting with Telstra to attend reference group meeting

Reference Group – to email Gemma or Janine your community's issues with Telstra service in your area

Givit.org acknowledged as the best pathway for donations to made in the immediate aftermath of disaster

Community halls recognised as information points/day shelters and places where rural communities gather. Contacts between community areas and Community halls to become more established and more widely known to emergency services to facilitate communications in an emergency

Paul - have been investing a lot of time into halls, contacts through halls, putting up a solid database for communications

Bree - these responses need to be community designed and community led, whether its council or other stake holders, to help develop step by step process, that endorsed by council and taking in risks, more likely there will be response from community

Community Resilience Teams (as defined by the Red Cross) have been set up at Old Bar and Harrington. These are community networks, established to facilitate communication to each other and then back up to SES/RFS in disaster. Typically there is a focus on disaster preparedness and mapping out community strengths and community needs incorporating features such as bushfire survival plans, vulnerable people's needs, access in and out of communities, how communities can mobilise in an emergency to remain safe when Emergency Services aren't able to immediately assist

4 Update on BCRRF community grants program

Council applied for a community grants program, we were successful, Gemma will transition into this role from July, community grants, pool of 150K available

Bree – Mission Australia recently received 200K from PHN, to go towards schools in bushfire impacted communities, a 12-month program called "Community

	<p>Wellbeing Program” as a bushfire recovery measure, addressing the additional layers of trauma and stress on our community. Will forward on details.</p> <p>Sharon – Mid Coast Outreach rolling out 50 houses with gardening support, free counselling in PTSD trauma on Tuesday and Thursdays</p>
5	<p>Review of issues document</p> <p>Paul – if anybody wants to raise anything by exception, the key part is what we will play, its what we are committed to doing, there are areas we can build on, we have indicated where we think we can assist in that space.</p> <p>Reference Group – send issues with Telecommunications to Gemma or Janine recovery@midcoast.nsw.gov.au</p>
6	<p>Future directions for the reference group as a whole</p> <p>Paul – life of this group doesn’t go past September, all Council committees extinguished when new council takes over, part of the discussion we need to be more holistic after back to back disasters, referencing both fire and flood, we want to put to Council that this becomes a recovery group that deals with all types of disasters. The model will be slightly different, 13 areas, MidCoast wide. The idea is that this is tiered, 13 social catchments, some large and small, with these social catchments have a meeting within their patch and one rep from those areas become part of this group. This is in draft but that’s our plan moving forward, to come together at this table with mayor, to assist the LEMO to assist all communities, not sure if model has been tried in any area.</p> <p>Resilience NSW are pushing us to have an LGA wide recovery group, how do you get a representative from each community, coming up with a bespoke model</p> <p>Bettina – this makes much more sense! Congregations of communities coming together, meeting and reporting back</p> <p>Paul – next evolution, using those reps to report to council, same area committee, we can use this model to get other issues brought up</p> <p>Peter – could possibly be part of that flood plain management committee</p> <p>Sharon – as an advisory role, is Resilience NSW going to put on a community system into place</p> <p>Paul – they are not, Resilience NSW are pulling back in that support</p> <p>Mayor – all councils lose contact with their community; this would ensure that we didn’t</p>
	<p>General Business</p> <p>Lindsay – When will we hear about Murrays replacement for the halls upgrade program?</p> <p>Paul – will talk tomorrow and find out</p> <p>Mayor - Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and effort and your commitment</p>

Actions

Responsibility	Action	Status
Trypheyra	Email Janine about Neighbours property – connect for water tank issued by council	
Recovery team	Investigate who holds responsibility for operating an evacuation centre that hasn't been stood up	
Recovery Team	Look at education programs to help inform the community about how to access correct information during an emergency	
Trypheyra and Janine	To discuss GIVIT outside of meeting	
Janine	To track down information about the temporary bridge in Wherrol flat/Caparra and when its scheduled for works	
Bree	To forward on information about grants for schools	
Reference Group	All members to send issues about telecommunications to recovery@midcoast.nsw.gov.au	

Next meeting

Date	6 July 2021	Time	5pm – 7pm
Venue	YG or zoom	Note-taker	Gemma Cluff