

Government response to the Deputy Coroner's Recommendations from the Wangary Coronial Inquest

Recommendation 1

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services, the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service, the President of the Farmers' Federation of South Australia and the Minister for Local Government, with a view to developing a Code of Practice, establish a body to investigate the impact of existing farming practices on bushfire risk and prevention.

Agreed

The Wangary Working Party recommended that the South Australian Bushfire Prevention Advisory Committee (SABPAC) undertake this role. The Minister for Emergency Services has written to SABPAC requesting they take on this role. It has subsequently confirmed that they will undertake this role. A representative nominated by the South Australian Bushfire Prevention Advisory Committee will be attending the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party meetings.

This work will include reviewing current codes of practice such as the Grain Harvesting Code of Practice in conjunction with the outcomes of research from Recommendations 2 and 3 to determine whether amendments are required or a new Code of Practice needs to be developed.

It is anticipated that this work will commence in September 2008 once the research report has been delivered with a Code of Practice complete by the first quarter of 2009.

This recommendation is in the process of being implemented. The implementation will be monitored by SAFECOM until complete.

Recommendation 2

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services cause independent scientific or other research to be undertaken to identify the effects of continuous cropping, minimum tillage, direct drilling seeding practices and of the retention of cropping stubble, in respect of bushfire risk and prevention.

Agreed

Department of Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia (PIRSA) have been asked to co-ordinate the research on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services.

This research will be undertaken by Dr Kevin Tolhurst from the School of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne and Jim Egan and Sam Doudle from South Australia Research and Development Institute.

A two stage research project is underway to look at the impact of crop type on flammability and other fire characteristics of mature paddock residues, and the effect of tillage and stubble retention practices on the accumulation of above ground, readily combustible fuel over time. The second stage will use a fire characterisation model to explore the effects of different cropping regimes on wildfire spread.

The final report is due on 30 September 2008. Once the report is received it will be considered by CFS, SAFECOM and the South Australian Bushfire Prevention Advisory Committee in conjunction with recommendation 1.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 3

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services cause independent scientific or other research to be undertaken to establish means by which risk of bushfires, as created by continuous cropping, minimum tillage, direct drilling seeding practices and the retention of cropping stubble across the landscape, can be minimised.

Agreed

PIRSA has been asked to co-ordinate the research for recommendation 2 and 3, as there are natural synergies between these two recommendations.

This research will be undertaken by Dr Kevin Tolhurst from the School of Forest and Ecosystem Science, University of Melbourne and Jim Egan and Sam Doudle from South Australia Research and Development Institute.

A two stage research project is underway to look at the impact of crop type on flammability and other fire characteristics of mature paddock residues, and the effect of tillage and stubble retention practices on the accumulation of above ground, readily combustible fuel over time. The second stage will use a fire characterisation model to explore the effects of different cropping regimes on wildfire spread.

The final report is due on 30 September 2008. Once the report is received it will be considered by CFS, SAFECOM and the South Australian Bushfire Prevention Advisory Committee in conjunction with recommendation 1.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 4

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Local Government consider the enactment of legislation that would empower Local Government to require the owners or occupiers of rural land to create fire breaks on the land of a kind that Local Government may determine and/or to require the removal of flammable materials from the land, as measures for preventing the outbreak of a bushfire, or for preventing the spread or extension of a bushfire.

Agreed

Powers are afforded to Local Government Fire Prevention Officers under section 83 of the *Fire and Emergency Services Act*. These powers allow a local government authority to enforce the obligation on private land owners and occupiers to take reasonable steps to protect property on the land from fire and to prevent or inhibit the outbreak of fire on the land, or through the land.

However, this section relates to issues of fire hazard land management practices as a whole and is not explicit to specific land management practices such as fire breaks.

There are proposed changes to the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* which will address the following:

- clarify the scope of enforceable fire prevention steps under section 83 (that is while maintaining an approach based on risk of fire, identify by example the activities that a notice can direct such as the creation of a firebreak), and
- re-define the criteria before a notice can be issued to make it less complex and to make it easier to satisfy the requirement for the issue of an enforceable notice (options include permitting a notice to be issued if there is any practicable measure not taken that would eliminate or minimise the risk of fire and not requiring there be an unreasonable risk of fire before a notice can be issued).

The necessary changes to the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* can be accommodated as part of the legislative process arising from the review of that Act.

Work to complete this recommendation is underway. When appropriate amendments to the Fire and Emergency Service Act have been made a full training and communications program will occur with Local Government and other stakeholders. In addition, a community awareness program will occur to ensure that community members are aware of the changes and their requirements under the amended Act.

This recommendation is currently being addressed by the LGA/CFS Reference Group who report on progress to the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party. The implementation will be monitored by SAFECOM until complete.

Recommendation 5

I recommend that the President of the South Australian Farmers' Federation of South Australia draws these recommendations and findings to the attention of its members and constituents.

Agreed

The South Australian Farmers Federation has brought members' attention to the recommendations and findings of the Wangary bushfire in a number of ways. The agenda for the SAFF Grains AGM 2008 included the findings as a specific item to raise awareness, as well as issuing member updates. There is representation on the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party from the South Australian Farmers' Federation.

In addition, the Commissioner of Fire and Emergencies has written to the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia to highlight the findings to its members.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 6

I recommend that the South Australian Farmers' Federation encourage its members and constituents to keep and maintain on rural land in proper working order machinery that is capable of removing, modifying or reducing cropping stubble at short notice in order to minimise or mitigate bushfire risk.

Agreed in part

This recommendation proposes the use of farming machinery to be used at short notice in emergency incidents. The South Australian Farmers' Federation has advised that the appropriate machinery for this purpose is no longer readily available due to changing land use and farming practices.

The proposal put forward by the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party is to utilise a Memorandum of Understanding that is already in existence between local government and SAFECOM for the use of plant and equipment. The Memorandum of Understanding has been created underpinning the important role that local councils have in local community emergency management. This contribution may be the voluntary provision of plant and equipment for agreed times during emergency events.

Joint presentations by SAFECOM, CFS and LGA are scheduled to occur during July and August to communicate this process. A central database of those councils and the key contact personnel will be established and maintained by SAFECOM in conjunction with the CFS and LGA.

This recommendation is being implemented by SAFECOM in conjunction with the Local Government Association.

Recommendation 7

I recommend that the Minister for Local Government cause rural councils to appoint an Officer whose duties consist entirely of bushfire prevention, such Officer being required to become a trained, operative member of the South Australian Country Fire Service during the currency of his or her appointment.

Agreed in principle

Section 7 of the *Local Government Act 1999* which is committed to the Minister for State/Local Government Relations provides that the functions of a council include taking measures to protect its area from natural and other hazards and to mitigate the effects of such hazards.

However the legislation that this recommendation relates to is the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* which is committed to the Minister for Emergency Services, not the Minister for State/Local Government Relations.

The Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party agreed in principle with the Deputy Coroner's recommendation, however was of the view that this was a more complex matter than just bushfire prevention.

One option to implement this recommendation is to utilise a landscape risk based approach to determine key risk areas for all hazards.

A pilot currently being carried out on Kangaroo Island is an example where this is being put into practice.

There is currently requirement under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* Part 4, Division 7 Subdivision 3 - Fire Prevention Officers that each rural council must appoint a suitably qualified fire prevention officer for its area. This is currently in place within rural councils however not all fire prevention officers undertake this as a full time role.

Once risks across all emergencies are determined and regional/local boundaries identified according to that risk, appointment of officers across all hazards or up-skilling of existing Fire Prevention Officers will be considered.

The 2008/09 Budget provides funding of \$0.414 million over four years for an Emergency Management Officer to be based in SES to work with Local Government to progress the above approach. The position will provide planning oversight and will develop emergency management plans. In addition the role will play a key part in ensuring a co-ordinated link between local government fire prevention officers and emergency services.

Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of this recommendation will be carried out by SAFECOM.

Recommendation 8

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services in conjunction with the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service, the Chief Officer of the South Australian State Emergency Services and the Commissioner of South Australia Police develop policies and practices regarding the issuing of public warnings that address the risk posed to the public by an existing fire incident with a view to disseminating such warnings to the public at a time before the escalation of an existing fire incident occurs.

Agreed

Prior to the 2005/2006 Fire Danger Season a Bushfire Information and Warning System was implemented to replace the phased warning system in place at the time of the Wangary Bushfire.

The Bushfire Information and Warning System is designed to provide information through multiple channels such that the community and individuals are able to make informed decisions in response to the threat of a bushfire in their area. To achieve this, the information is distributed through either a Bushfire Information Message or Bushfire Warning Message.

A Bushfire Information Message is issued if a bushfire is threatening or has the potential to pose a threat to public safety in the immediate area of the fire or is producing an undesirable effect such as smoke in an area that may cause concern to the public. This type of message is authorised by the CFS Regional Duty Officer.

A Bushfire Warning Message is issued if a major bushfire is burning out of control under very high to extreme weather conditions and there is the potential for loss of life or threat to a significant number of properties. This type of message is authorised by the CFS Deputy State Co-ordinator on recommendation of the CFS Regional Duty Officer.

This Information and Warning System has been endorsed by the State Response Advisory Group (SRAG).

In relation to this recommendation, this is deemed complete, however advice from the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party was to consider this recommendation in a wider context than bushfire. Accordingly, on 9 April 2008, the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) endorsed an all hazards policy called – a 'Principles based approach for the Dissemination of Emergency Information and Warnings to the Community of South Australia' during Emergencies. The CFS Bushfire Information and Warning System was included as an appendix to this policy and as an example of the application of the principles based approach to the dissemination of emergency information and warnings.

Each control agency will now be charged with the responsibility of developing and implementing policies and procedures for the dissemination of emergency information and warnings for their hazards that are consistent with these principles.

This work has and will continue to be developed in close alignment with national initiatives and standards that are proposed.

The 2008/09 Budget provides funding of \$0.414 million over four years for an Emergency Management Officer who will assist in the development of a system to ensure the timely issuing of warnings for all hazards (including bushfire, storm, flood, earthquake, hazardous materials and major structural fires).

This recommendation is being implemented within all agencies.

Ongoing monitoring of the implementation of this recommendation will be carried out by the State Response Advisory Group and SAFECOM.

Recommendation 9

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services, the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service, the Chief Officer of the South Australian State Emergency Services and the Commissioner of Police establish a panel to develop policies and practices to ensure that at the time bushfire warnings are created and delivered, all such warnings are made known to all emergency service entities, and to ensure that warnings of an approaching fire are delivered in a timely manner with detailed and specific information relevant to the circumstances of the section of the public to whom they are directed.

Agreed

The State Response Advisory Group (SRAG) will be the “panel to develop policies and procedures” in accordance with recommendation 9 and that the Principles based approach for the Dissemination of Emergency Information and Warnings to the Community of South Australia’ will be the “policies and procedures” as per recommendation 8.

This recommendation is deemed complete for the CFS.

Recommendation 10

I recommend that South Australian Country Fire Service create and develop the role of a Regional Public Warnings Officer as a member of the paid staff of the CFS whose role it would be to identify the need for, and to deliver, timely bushfire warnings to the public during the course of a bushfire incident.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has implemented procedures that enable CFS Officers who are performing the role of CFS Regional Co-ordinator to carry out the function of Regional Public Warnings Officer as part of their specified responsibilities. It is not necessary to have a permanent member of staff to carry out this function.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 11

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service empower the Regional Public Warnings Officer to create and deliver public warnings on that Officer's initiative without the necessity of seeking the approval of personnel at State Headquarters.

Agreed in part

As part of their revised responsibilities, the CFS Regional Co-ordinator is empowered to create and deliver public warnings consistent with the Bushfire Information and Warning System and the State Emergency Management Plan in conjunction with recommendation 10.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 12

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services in conjunction with the South Australian Country Fire Service conduct tuition courses to be made available to the general public to enable members of the public to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to implement their preparation and planning for bushfires.

Agreed

CFS community education programs already underpin the need for communities to be bushfire ready. The CFS conducts three types of community meetings aimed at educating and better preparing communities:

- Bushfire Blitz meetings (around 45 minutes),
- Bushfire Awareness meetings (around 2.5 hours long), and
- Community Fire Safe meetings which are part of a longer term in depth support program to communities at the highest level of risk.

The 2007/08 Budget included \$2 million over four years for community education activities to allow additional seasonal positions to visit at risk communities and conduct Bushfire Blitz and Community Fire Safe programs. It also allowed for the awareness campaign, *Bushfire Ready*, to target bushfire prone areas.

Over the 2007/08 Fire Danger Season over 8,000 people attended 206 bushfire education and awareness events. An additional 38 new Community Fire Safe Groups have been established bringing the total to 277 groups across the state. The figures have shown improvement over the past year and it is anticipated they will continue to rise over the coming Fire Danger Season.

The appointment of the Director of Community Resilience in SAFECOM is a key strategy for implementing this recommendation. This role will review the public risk profile and current resources, audit current programs that are delivered to communities in order to both identify and address gaps. A reallocation of resources will occur within the sector aligned with the recognition of those gaps.

The Bushfire Blitz program provides a practical approach in how to prepare a house and to be bushfire ready. These programs will be reviewed with a view to exploring two avenues, one through TAFE SA and evening courses delivered to communities or alternatively through the implementation of online learning resources through the SAFECOM environment. It is anticipated that a program will be made available by October 2008.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 13

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the South Australian Country Fire Service implement programs to develop in the minds of citizens a heightened awareness of bushfire risk, and in particular to encourage citizens to listen for radio announcements relating to the progression of a fire during the course of a bushfire incident.

Agreed

Communities are actively encouraged by the CFS to listen to 5AA and ABC radios in particular for bushfire incident information and members of the public are directed to the CFS website and to contact the CFS bushfire hotline as part of a continuing campaign.

The 2008/09 Fire Danger Season advertising campaign will also address this recommendation in encouraging the community to listen to radio announcements and media alerts. In addition, the CFS website will be improved for easier use by the community and will include current incident information and fire bans.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 14

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services, the South Australian Country Fire Service, the South Australia Police and the South Australian Farmers' Federation together continue to develop strategies to reduce the risk of harm to private firefighters and in particular:

- a) Formulate a code of practice to ensure that the South Australian Country Fire Service and the South Australia Police are aware of the presence of private firefighters and private fire appliances at a fireground so as to discourage the ad hoc deployment of private firefighters and private farm appliances;*
- b) Develop an education program for private firefighters dealing with implementation of safe practices for private firefighters, with emphasis on but not limited to, consideration of the effect of wind changes and the dangers associated with proceeding into a fireground with lack of information about the existing circumstances pertaining to that fireground.*
- c) Formulate a structure whereby private firefighters at a fireground act in conjunction with, and not separately from, South Australian Country Fire Service resources;*
- d) Develop protocols relating to minimum requirements in respect of reliability of private fire fighting units, dress for private firefighters, the need for appropriate radio communication, but not limited to those issues;*
- e) Develop a position within the structure of Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams of a Private Fire fighting Liaison Officer.*

Agreed

In recognition of the presence of private fire fighting units attending incidents to assist their local communities, the CFS in conjunction with the South Australian Farmers' Federation through a working group called the Farm Fire Unit Working Party has created two separate procedures and information documents that address this recommendation in full.

An example of this being implemented by the CFS and in accordance with this recommendation occurred during the Kangaroo Island fires in December 2007. At this time both interstate firefighters and private firefighting units assisted with the bushfires. Accordingly, the Divisional Commander liaised with private firefighting units in order to ensure they were operating with the SACFS structure and its strategies.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 15

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service cause to be included among the CFS' Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) a requirement that Incident Management Teams responsible for the management of bushfire incidents make all reasonable attempts to contact and maintain contact with the owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has directed that CFS Regional Co-ordinators are to ensure that for Incident Management Teams established for level 2 and level 3 bushfire incidents:

- consideration is given to the need to make all reasonable attempts to contact and maintain contact with the owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated; and
- in considering whether such attempts must be made, the CFS Regional Co-ordinator must discuss this issue with the Incident Controller.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 16

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service cause to be included among the CFS' Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) a requirement that Incident Management Teams responsible for the management of bushfire incidents seek information from the owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated as to the topography, vegetation, existing fire breaks, accessibility and local weather conditions pertinent to that land.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has directed that CFS Regional Co-ordinators are to ensure that for Incident Management Teams established for level 2 and level 3 bushfire incidents:

- consideration is given to the need to seek information from owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated as to the topography, vegetation, existing fire breaks accessibility and local weather conditions pertinent to that land; and
- in considering whether such information must be sought, the CFS Regional Co-ordinator must discuss this issue with the Incident Controller.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 17

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service cause to be included among the CFS' Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) a requirement that Incident Management Teams responsible for a bushfire incident seek advice from the owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated as to the possible fire fighting strategies and possible containment measures that might be implemented in order to bring a fire on the land under control, and to take such advice into consideration in the management of the incident.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has issued a directive that the CFS Regional Co-ordinator is to ensure that for Incident Management Teams established for Level 2 and Level 3 bushfire incidents:

- consideration should be given to the need to seek advice from the owners and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated as to the possible fire fighting strategies and possible containment measures that might be implemented in order to bring a fire on the land under control; and
- in considering whether such advice must be sought, the CFS Regional Co-ordinator must discuss this issue with the Incident Controller.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 18

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service consider the creation of a position within an Incident Management Team of a Landowner Liaison Officer the duties and responsibilities of whom is to establish contact with and liaise with the owner and/or occupiers of rural land on which a fire is situated.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has issued a directive that in exercising their duties CFS Regional Co-ordinators are to ensure that for Incident Management Teams established for level 2 and level 3 bushfire incidents:

- consideration is given to the need to establish an Incident Management Team member who will perform the functions of Landowner Liaison Officer; and
- in considering whether to appoint a Landowner Liaison Officer, the CFS Regional Co-ordinator must discuss this issue with the Incident Controller.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 19

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service reinforce in the minds of those Officers who perform the role of Regional Duty Officer the duties and responsibilities attaching to that position insofar as they apply to an ongoing fire incident, and in particular to recognise the need to conduct a risk assessment in relation to an incident and the need to scrutinise, evaluate and validate the strategies and Incident Action Plans of Incident Management Teams.

Agreed

The actions outlined in this recommendation are carried out as part of the CFS Operational Update sessions held in the lead up to each fire danger season for both CFS volunteers and CFS staff.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 20

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service reinforce in the minds of those Officers who perform the role of Regional Duty Officer the need to deliver to the Deputy State Co-ordinator timely, accurate and relevant information pertaining to an ongoing fire incident.

Agreed

The CFS Chief Officer has requested that individuals carrying out the role of CFS Regional Co-ordinator are to ensure that relevant incident information for 'Going' bushfires is provided to the Deputy State Co-ordinator in an accurate and timely way. This information is to be consistent with the Chief Officers Standing Order- *Situation Reports and Operations Management Guidelines*.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 21

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Chief Officer of the South Australian Country Fire Service reinforce in the minds of all Incident Management Team members, in particular but not limited to the Incident Controller and Planning Officer, of the need to conduct a full risk assessment that not only addresses operational risk, but the risk posed to the general public by an existing incident and at all times to consider and identify the 'worst case scenario' outcome.

Agreed

The actions outlined in this recommendation are carried out as part of the Operational Update sessions held in the lead up to each fire danger season for both volunteers and staff.

In addition the SACFS Chief Officer has requested that SACFS Officers who are performing the function of Regional Co-ordinator review the existing risk assessment processes in relation to incidents and ensure the implementation of the principles and processes are taken into consideration at incidents and Incident Management Team planning processes.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams.

In addition, mentoring systems and accreditation processes will be further developed and targets established for command, leadership, incident management and risk assessment created and communicated to members.

The initiative also includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 22

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service develop as part of competency for inclusion on a Level 2 or Level 3 Incident Management Team a minimum requirement of demonstrated skill and competency in risk assessment.

Agreed

Training provided by the CFS to Incident Management Teams takes the form of training in the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS). The AIIMS system contains specific elements on risk assessment and the CFS operational updates have been delivered over the past three years including risk assessment processes.

In addition to this, the CFS Command and Leadership Framework includes specific elements on risk assessment. Training delivered to members of Incident Management Teams via the CFS Command and Leadership Framework is delivered by National Accredited Trainers/Assessors. The CFS use a combination of internal and external Trainers/Assessors and the training/assessments are carried out in accordance with nationally consistent standards.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams.

In addition, mentoring systems and accreditation processes will be further developed and targets established for command, leadership, incident management and risk assessment created and communicated to members. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative also includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 23

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service design tuition courses aimed specifically at developing among its members skill and competency in risk assessment.

Agreed

Training provided by the CFS to Incident Management Teams in the use of the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) contains specific elements on risk assessment and Operational updates including risk assessment processes, have been delivered over the past three years. In addition to this, the CFS Command and Leadership program includes this.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams.

In addition, mentoring systems and accreditation processes will be further developed and targets established for command, leadership, incident management and risk assessment created and communicated to members. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative also includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 24

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service develop as part of competency for inclusion on a Level 2 or Level 3 Incident Management Team a minimum requirement of demonstrated skill and competency in identifying and implementing feasible and appropriate containment measures designed to bring control to a fire incident so as to minimise the risk posed to the general public.

Agreed

The nationally accredited Suppress Wildfire Course has been identified by the CFS as the course which will be adopted as a minimum requirement of demonstrated skill and competency in identifying and implementing feasible and appropriate containment measures designed to bring control to a fire incident so as to minimise the risk posed to the general public. This course delivers the information required by this recommendation and has key competency criteria which must be met. Competency in the Suppress Wildfire Course is now a mandatory requirement for all CFS Operational Staff.

CFS is currently consulting with Volunteers with the view of making Suppress Wildfire a mandatory requirement for all personnel who perform the specific functions on Level 2 or Level 3 bushfire Incident Management Teams.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams.

In addition, mentoring systems and accreditation processes will be further developed and targets established for command, leadership, incident management and risk assessment created and communicated to members. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative also includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 25

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service design tuition courses aimed specifically at developing among its members skill and competency in identifying and implementing feasible and appropriate containment measures designed to bring control to a fire incident so as to minimise the risk posed to the general public.

Agreed

The nationally accredited Suppress Wildfire Course has been identified by the CFS as the course which will be adopted as a minimum requirement of demonstrated skill and competency in identifying and implementing feasible and appropriate containment measures designed to bring control to a fire incident so as to minimise the risk posed to the general public. This course delivers the information required by this recommendation and has key competency criteria which must be met.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 26

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service establish pre-planned Level 2 Incident Management Teams in each Region for deployment to Level 2 incidents.

Agreed

An audit carried out by the CFS of current levels of level 2 Incident Management Teams in each region shows that the CFS target level of two level 2 Incident Management Teams has been achieved.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for an additional \$2.317 million over four years for support for Incident Management Teams.

The initiative provides a staff member who will coordinate the support of Incident Management Teams. In addition, mentoring systems and accreditation processes will be further developed and targets established for command, leadership, incident management and risk assessment created and communicated to members. This will include maintaining records of personnel, identifying competencies required for specific Incident Management Team roles and arranging access to training in those competencies.

The initiative also includes funding to develop and conduct additional training courses for Incident Management Team personnel. This will include training courses in the areas of command and leadership, bushfire behaviour as well as the specific roles of incident control, operations, planning and logistics.

A separate task group will work to develop the skills and competency of those identified for Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Management Teams, documenting those processes and the technology used.

This recommendation is deemed complete but will be additionally supported by the initiative above.

Recommendation 27

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service utilise wherever possible the skills of paid, professional staff to perform the roles of Incident Controller and/or Planning Officer in Level 2 Incident Management Teams.

Agreed in part

The CFS will continue to use a combination of salaried and volunteer personnel to fill the role of Incident Controller and/or Planning Officer for Level 2 and Level 3 Incidents based on demonstrated competency.

It is important to point out that there are significant resources in the sector that can be harnessed for use during major incidents. The CFS, MFS and SES all use the same incident management systems, AIIMS.

Further integration across the incident management teams and processes to allow for inter-agency incident management of any major incident in the State is ongoing. This will result in more effective incident management services to the community without an additional cost burden.

The Government values and respects volunteers and would not wish to see a diminishing of the culture of a volunteer fire service by having paid personnel only perform the roles of Incident Controller and/or Planning Officer in level 2 Incident Management Teams.

This recommendation is complete.

Recommendation 28

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service identify and impart minimum skills and competencies to members who fulfil the roles of the four core AIIMS functionaries of a Level 2 Incident Management Team.

Agreed

The CFS Incident Management Framework has been endorsed, identifying the minimum training requirements for IMT personnel. CFS has commenced a full review of the competency levels identified as having a management role within a level 2 or level 3 incidents.

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 29

I recommend that the South Australian Country Fire Service create as part of a Level 2 and 3 Incident Management Team Logistics Division an Officer whose function it is to seek out, locate and identify sources of water, be they on land or provided by carrier

Agreed

The CFS Regional Co-ordinator is to ensure that for Incident Management Teams established for level 2 and level 3 bushfire incidents, consideration is to be given to, and discussed with the Incident Controller, the need to establish an Incident Management Team member whose function is to seek out, locate and identify sources of water.

In addition, there are existing powers under section 98 of the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* afforded to CFS Incident Controllers that allows them to direct a water authority for an area in which a fire is occurring to send a competent person to assist in the provision of water.

The 2008/09 Budget provides for large capacity water tanks at ten strategic airstrips across South Australia over a four year period. The sites are yet to be determined.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 30

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services give further consideration to acquiring a fire fighting helicopter to be permanently or primarily stationed in South Australia.

Agreed

South Australia is pursuing a lease to enable the placement of a type 1 helicopter in the State for the 2008-09 Fire Danger Season.

The 2008/09 budget provides for an additional \$15.930 million over four years to increase aerial firefighting capacity in South Australia.

This Budget initiative includes the following components:

- A large capacity firefighting helicopter, such as an Aircrane, to be based in South Australia during the bushfire season.
- An upgrade of fire retardant mixing infrastructure for aerial firefighting.
- Additional staffing for the safe and effective management of air operations.
- Establishment of bulk water supplies at strategic airstrips.

The large capacity helicopter will be in addition to the existing aerial firefighting fleet.

For the 2007-08 bushfire season, the South Australian aerial firefighting fleet included:

Mount Lofty Ranges

- 2 fixed wing bombers
- 2 medium firefighting helicopters
- 1 surveillance helicopter

Lower South East

- 2 fixed wing bombers
- 1 fixed wing surveillance

Lower Eyre Peninsula

- 2 fixed wing bombers
- 1 fixed wing surveillance

Secondary Response

- 1 fixed wing bomber
- 1 fixed wing surveillance
- Access to Adelaide Bank Rescue Helicopters
- Access to additional fixed wing bombers

The large capacity firefighting helicopter will work in conjunction with the existing fleet. The fixed wing bombers provide rapid initial attack while the large capacity helicopter is very effective in high risk urban/bushland interface areas.

The bushfire risk to South Australia, due to continuing dry conditions, is very real and was demonstrated during 2007-08 with significant fires on Kangaroo Island and at Belair, Williamstown and Willunga. The large capacity helicopter that was brought across to South Australia for Kangaroo Island proved effective in each of these fires.

While aircraft are a valuable firefighting resource, they do not replace the need for firefighters on the ground. Aircraft are used in conjunction and support our firefighters.

Firefighting aircraft are procured through a national tendering process coordinated by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre to ensure value for money.

South Australia's expenditure on firefighting aircraft has increased significantly:

- 2001-02 - \$0.831 million (actual)
- 2002-03 - \$1.558 million (actual)
- 2003-04 - \$2.081 million (actual)
- 2004-05 - \$2.386 million (actual)
- 2005-06 - \$2.940 million (actual)
- 2006-07 - \$2.55 million budget; \$5.720 million (actual)
- 2007-08 - \$3.55 million budget; \$5.942 million (estimated actual)
- 2008-09 - \$6.795 million (budget)

This recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation 31

I recommend that the Chief Officer and the Editors of all newspapers and other media outlets develop a Memorandum of Understanding that ensures that all CFS press releases concerning total fire ban days and ongoing bushfire incidents are published in full.

Agreed

A memorandum of understanding is in place between the CFS, ABC and 5AA media outlets. This ensures that information pertaining to bushfire incidents is delivered through media outlets to the community as quickly as possible. In addition, the CFS provides press releases and ongoing incident information on fire bans and ongoing incidents to all media outlets which are also displayed on the CFS website.

To commence implementing the recommendation, the CFS Chief Officer and SAFECOM Public Affairs staff held a workshop with representatives of media outlets. Discussions have occurred about extending the current MOU beyond the ABC and Radio 5AA. SAFECOM Public Affairs are also reviewing the current MOU with ABC and 5AA and will be working to encourage other media outlets to adopt this approach.

This recommendation is being implemented by SAFECOM Public Affairs team and an outcome will be determined by the 2008/09 Fire Danger Season.

Recommendation 32

I recommend that the Minister for Transport, in conjunction with any other relevant authority, conduct research in relation to the question as to whether or not aftermarket, non-standard mufflers are suitable devices to be fitted to vehicles that are used in rural environments.

Agreed

Research has now been completed by DTEI and this research does not support a ban or restriction on aftermarket, non-standard mufflers which are appropriately fitted and in good condition.

The legislation at the time of the Wangary Bushfire was the *Country Fires Act 1989* and improvements have been made since that time. Changes have been made to Section 89 of the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005* and Regulations 37, 38 and 39 in respect to exhaust systems during the Fire Danger Season.

This recommendation is deemed complete.

Recommendation 33

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services, the Minister for Environment, the Chief Officer of the CFS and the Native Vegetation Council, together develop a Code of Practice relating to the management of native vegetation as it affects bushfire prevention.

Agreed

A separate task group comprising of representatives from the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation, South Australian Farmers Federation, South Australian Country Fire Service, Department for Environment and Heritage, Native Vegetation Council, Local Government Association and Conservation Council of South Australia are currently working under the Wangary Coronial Inquest Working Party on this recommendation.

The task group have commenced working on a draft code titled: *Code of practice for the management of native vegetation to reduce the impact of bushfire.*

Consultation by the task group is ongoing with a view to providing a draft Code of Practice to the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Environment and Conservation in July 2008.

It is anticipated that the Code of Practice will be in place prior to the 2008/09 Fire Danger Season.

This recommendation is in progress of being implemented. Progress will be monitored by SAFECOM.

Recommendation 34

I recommend that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Local Government cause local council plant and equipment that is suitable for use in bushfire fighting be fitted with radios connected to the Government Radio Network.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has been considered. Advice from the working party stressed the need to ensure that effective communications are maintained with local council plant and equipment operators during bushfire incidents. This may not necessarily be the Government Radio Network as the best platform. A separate task group is to be established to put forward appropriate options for consideration.

CFS will co-ordinate the task group with relevant stakeholders and will put forward a report for consideration by August 2008.

This will also be an agenda item to be discussed by the LGA/CFS Reference Group as part of the liaison work between emergency services and local councils.

This recommendation is awaiting implementation. Ongoing monitoring will occur by SAFECOM in the implementation of this recommendation.