Progress Report
July 2011
The ‘New Life Sculpture’ is a figurative sculpture of a young girl, intended to mark and celebrate new life within Marysville. The sculpture represents the community’s creativity and strength and is deeply significant and playful at the same time.

Local artist Bruno Torfs explains that "the sculpture captures the moment when a young girl releases a bird into the air, symbolising the community honouring the past and embracing the future."

Print managed by Finsbury Green.

PROGRESS REPORT
Preface

The Final Report of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) was handed down on 31 July 2010. The VBRC Final Report contains 67 recommendations, which focus on improving preparation for, responses to and recovery from bushfires, with a view to protecting lives and making communities safer. The VBRC observed:

*Considerable work will be needed to implement those recommendations that are accepted by government.*

Recommendation 66 of the VBRC Final Report recommended:

*The State appoint an implementation monitor or the Victorian Auditor-General to assess progress with implementing the Commission’s recommendations and report to the Parliament and the people of Victoria by 31 July 2012.*

In accordance with this recommendation, on 14 October 2010 the former State Government announced my appointment as the independent Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM).

The role of the BRCIM was formalised through the passing of the *Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor Act 2011* (BRCIM Act) in April 2011 and a Governor in Council appointment of 19 April 2011. The BRCIM Act establishes the position and relevant powers and functions and requires that I provide two reports for tabling in Parliament – a Progress Report by 31 July 2011 and a Final Report by 31 July 2012.

This *Progress Report* records the progress of agencies in fulfilling the state’s obligation to deliver on its response to the final recommendations of the VBRC as set out in the state’s Implementation Plan, together with any responses to the recommendations of the VBRC’s Interim Reports that have not been fully implemented. Where possible, I have assessed the effectiveness of the methods used to carry out the implementation actions, along with an evaluation of the efficacy of the actions.

*Neil Comrie AO, APM*
# Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCB</td>
<td>Australian Building Codes Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACR</td>
<td>Automatic Circuit Reclosers</td>
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<td>AIIMS</td>
<td>Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System</td>
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<td>AGD</td>
<td>Attorney General’s Department (Commonwealth)</td>
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<td>BAL</td>
<td>Bushfire Attack Level</td>
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<td>BAWG</td>
<td>Bushfire Action Working Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCA</td>
<td>Building Code of Australia</td>
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<td>BMF</td>
<td>Building Ministers’ Forum</td>
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<td>BOM</td>
<td>Bureau of Meteorology</td>
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<td>BPST</td>
<td>Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce</td>
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<td>BRCIM</td>
<td>Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRCIM Act</td>
<td><em>Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor Act 2011</em></td>
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<td>BUSHFIRE CRC</td>
<td>Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Alerting Protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Country Fire Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFA Act</td>
<td><em>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CFL Act</td>
<td><em>Conservation, Forests and Land Act 1987</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>DH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
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<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
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<td>DOJ</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
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<td>DPC</td>
<td>Department of Premier and Cabinet</td>
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<td>DPCD</td>
<td>Department of Planning and Community Development</td>
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<td>DPI</td>
<td>Department of Primary Industries</td>
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<td>DSE</td>
<td>Department of Sustainability and Environment</td>
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<td>DTF</td>
<td>Department of Treasury and Finance</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>EM Act</td>
<td><em>Emergency Management Act 1986</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EMJPIC</td>
<td>Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMMV</td>
<td>Emergency Management Manual Victoria</td>
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<td>ESCSF</td>
<td>Emergency Services Communication Strategic Framework</td>
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<td>ESV</td>
<td>Energy Safe Victoria</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>Fire Danger Index</td>
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<td>FDR</td>
<td>Fire Danger Rating</td>
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<td>FOP</td>
<td>Fire Operation Plans</td>
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<td>FRU</td>
<td>Fire Recovery Unit</td>
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<td>FSC</td>
<td>Fire Services Commissioner</td>
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<td>FSC Act</td>
<td><em>Fire Services Commissioner Act 2011</em></td>
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<td>FFDI</td>
<td>Forest Fire Danger Index</td>
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<td>GFDI</td>
<td>Grassland Fire Danger Index</td>
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<td>HBSAT</td>
<td>Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>Incident Control Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communications Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFMP</td>
<td>Integrated Fire Management Planning</td>
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<td>IMT</td>
<td>Incident Management Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGNV</td>
<td>Local Government Native Vegetation</td>
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<td>MAV</td>
<td>Municipal Association of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEECDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEMP</td>
<td>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</td>
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<td>MFB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board</td>
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<td>MFPO</td>
<td>Municipal Fire Prevention Officer</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Metropolitan Mobile Radio</td>
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<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>MSS</td>
<td>Municipal Strategic Statement</td>
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# Glossary of Terms

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>NEMC</td>
<td>National Emergency Management Committee</td>
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<td>NEO</td>
<td>Networked Emergency Organisations</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Construction Code</td>
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<td>NSP</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Safer Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>OESC</td>
<td>Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner</td>
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<td>OSOM</td>
<td>One Source One Message</td>
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<tr>
<td>OVGA</td>
<td>Office of the Victorian Government Architect</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFF</td>
<td>Project Firefighters</td>
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<td>RBPA</td>
<td>Regional Bushfire Planning Assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>State Control Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>SC&amp;MC</td>
<td>State Coordination and Management Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SERP</td>
<td>State Emergency Response Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMR</td>
<td>StateNet Mobile Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedure</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWER</td>
<td>Single Wire Earth Return</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFB</td>
<td>Total Fire Ban</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Township Protection Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTS</td>
<td>University of Technology Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>VBIL</td>
<td>Victorian Bushfire Information Line</td>
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<tr>
<td>VBRC</td>
<td>Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>VBRRRA</td>
<td>Victorian Bushfires Reconstruction and Recovery Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCAA</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFRR</td>
<td>Victorian Fire Risk Register</td>
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<td>VICSES</td>
<td>Victorian State Emergency Services</td>
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<td>VPP</td>
<td>Victorian Planning Provisions</td>
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<td>WMO</td>
<td>Wildfire Management Overlay</td>
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CHAPTER 2

Executive Summary

This Progress Report records progress made against each of the actions specified in Implementing the Government’s Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission May 2011 (the Implementation Plan) tabled in Parliament in May 2011. Where evidence has been received in relation to actions specified in the former government’s implementation plan, Making Victoria Fire Ready (the October 2010 Plan), these actions are also addressed.

Progress in relation to the implementation of these actions is reported up to 3 June 2011. Progress relating to the implementation of actions after this date will be reported in the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM) Final Report, to be tabled in Parliament by 31 July 2012.

This Progress Report outlines the state’s progress made in implementing these actions, the effectiveness of the methods used and the efficacy of the actions themselves.

In general terms, there has been considerable progress in the delivery of these actions and the state and its agencies have invested significant resources in responding to the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC). Achievements include:

- the appointment of the Fire Services Commissioner who must develop a fire service action reform plan to enhance the operational capacity and capability of the fire services
- increased joint standard operating procedures, exercising and training
- the annual planned burning program achieved its largest burning target in 20 years
- increased public awareness and information about bushfire safety
- mapping provided free of charge to the state’s emergency services organisations.

The BRCIM has found no evidence of neglect or lack of commitment in the delivery of these actions. However, there is some evidence that a small number of actions are progressing slower than expected, with the date for completion missed or the date for delivery extended. These include the upgrade of Divisional Command Centres, research into arson and the review of community warning sirens. The BRCIM will continue to closely monitor these matters until they are fully implemented.

In addition, while there has been limited opportunity to test the efficacy of actions under operational conditions due to the benign nature of the past two fire seasons, the BRCIM has expressed concern in relation to some actions. These include the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework, including shelter options, township protection plans, evacuation and arrangements for vulnerable people. The BRCIM raised these matters with the appropriate agencies and has been assured that further work is underway. These matters will be revisited as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

A number of important actions in the state’s Implementation Plan are scheduled to be delivered later in 2011 and 2012. These include the community fire refuges policy, the fire services levy, the non-compulsory buy back of some properties in high bush fire risk areas and the implementation of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework. The BRCIM considers the delivery of these actions to be critical in ensuring that all Victorians are better prepared for and protected from the threat of bushfires. These actions will be revisited as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

While each of these actions delivers on particular aspects of the VBRC’s recommendations, the overall focus of the Commission’s report, the priority of protecting human life, must not be lost. This can only be achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive and cohesive range of reforms across Victoria’s emergency management framework. The efficacy of the state’s...
response to the VBRC’s recommendations must be measured against this imperative and not simply by an assessment of the number of individual actions satisfactorily implemented.

Although the threat of bushfires over 2010-11 was minimal, a large proportion of the state was subjected to major flooding. This emergency had significant implications for emergency services and highlighted the complex nature of emergency management arrangements in Victoria. A review into the floods, the Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response, is currently underway. Relevant learnings from this Review will be considered as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

The role of the BRCIM is an effective mechanism for holding the state accountable for the implementation of the VBRC recommendations. However, it is important that all Victorians play their part in improving bushfire safety. The VBRC dedicated Chapter 9 of its Final Report to the issue of shared responsibility and reminded Victorians that government, individuals, households and communities all have a role to play in bushfire safety.

It is of concern to the BRCIM that anecdotal evidence is emerging that is indicative of a worrying level of public apathy associated with fire safety initiatives being implemented by the fire services and other government agencies. It is in everyone’s interest that individuals, households and communities participate in education programs about fire safety awareness, planning and preparation. The government and the media have a critical role in engaging with the community. All Victorians need to play a role in preparing and planning for bushfires and understanding bushfire safety, thereby minimising the risk of death and property loss.
Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor

Appointment of the BRCIM

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) was established on 16 February 2009 to investigate the causes of and responses to the bushfires which swept through parts of Victoria in late January and February 2009. The bushfires of 7 February 2009 resulted in the loss of 173 lives, over 2,000 homes destroyed and approximately 430,000 hectares burnt.

The Hon. Bernard Teague AO, chaired the VBRC, supported by Commissioners Ron McLeod AM and Susan Pascoe AM. The VBRC delivered Interim Reports on 17 August and 24 November 2009 and its Final Report on 31 July 2010.

The Final Report contained 67 recommendations. In the Preface to their Final Report, the Commissioners stated that the recommendations gave priority to protecting human life and were designed to reflect the shared responsibility that governments, agencies, communities and individuals have for minimising the prospect of a tragedy of the scale of the February 2009 fires, ever happening again.

Recommendation 66 of the VBRC Final Report recommended:

The State appoint an implementation monitor or the Victorian Auditor-General to assess progress with implementing the Commission’s recommendations and report to the Parliament and the people of Victoria by 31 July 2012.

In accordance with this recommendation, on 14 October 2010, the government announced the appointment of Mr Neil Comrie AO APM, former Victorian Chief Commissioner of Police, as the independent Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM) to assess the state’s progress in implementing the VBRC’s recommendations and provide a report to Parliament.

The BRCIM was assisted in the completion of this Progress Report by:

- Brian Hine, Director
- Simone Lugg, Manager Policy and Legal
- June Gray, Executive Assistant, Research and Project Support
- Jessica Malin, Policy Officer
- Megan Hughes, Editor.

Legislation

In April 2011, Parliament legislated to strengthen the independence of the BRCIM. The Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor Act 2011 (the BRCIM Act) provides the relevant powers, functions and duties for the BRCIM to report directly to Parliament. The Governor in Council formally appointed Mr Comrie to this role on 19 April 2011.

The BRCIM’s primary functions under the BRCIM Act are to monitor and review the progress of agencies in carrying out actions specified in the state’s Implementation Plan, the effectiveness of the method used and the efficacy of the implementation of such actions. In addition, the BRCIM will assess ongoing efforts to improve the interaction between agencies and councils for the purposes of planning and preparing for bushfires, as well as report on the state’s progress in implementing the recommendations of the VBRC’s Interim Reports that have not yet been fully implemented.
The BRCIM is required to provide two reports for tabling in Parliament – a Progress Report by 31 July 2011 and a Final Report by 31 July 2012 (the BRCIM Final Report).

The BRCIM also has powers to require information from agencies and to enter and inspect premises or documents as required if necessary to perform his functions and to observe or request the demonstration of the operation of a system, procedure or other thing. Agencies and their employees or officers must comply with any such reasonable requests. The BRCIM may also provide advice on the timeliness of completion of actions and remedial action required to implement a recommendation.

The BRCIM Act also provides that the Minister must prepare an Implementation Plan for tabling in Parliament. The Implementation Plan is the basis on which the BRCIM has assessed the state’s progress in implementing the VBRC’s Final Report recommendations. For further details on the state’s Implementation Plan, please refer to Chapter 4 of this Progress Report.


**Delivery Report**


On 4 November 2009, Mr Neil Comrie AO, APM was appointed the independent VBRC Implementation Monitor and required to complete a Delivery Report on behalf of the state.

The Delivery Report was prepared and submitted to the VBRC on 31 March 2010. The Delivery Report addressed the progress made by the state and its agencies regarding the implementation of the recommendations in the Interim Report of the VBRC. The Delivery Report noted concerns about progress in relation to some of the recommendations of the Interim Report, particularly in relation to fire danger ratings, neighbourhood safer places and the level of preparedness of some incident control centres. The BRCIM also noted slow progress in the local government sector.


The VBRC released a second Interim Report – Priorities for Building in Bushfire Prone Areas (Interim Report 2) on 24 November 2009 providing additional recommendations regarding priorities for building in bushfire prone areas.

Chapter 6 of this Progress Report provides an update on the state’s implementation of recommendations arising from both the VBRC’s Interim Reports.
State Implementation Plan

On 31 May 2011, in accordance with the provisions of the BRCIM Act, the Minister for Bushfire Response tabled in Parliament a document titled Implementing the Government’s Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission May 2011 (the Implementation Plan).

The Implementation Plan outlines what has been and will be done by the state in response to the VBRC’s recommendations, including details of the lead agency, associated actions and the allocated responsibilities and processes required to implement the VBRC’s recommendations. In addition, the plan sets out the actions government departments and emergency services will continue to take in partnership with local government and communities to protect Victorians from the threat of future bushfires.

A copy of the Implementation Plan can be downloaded from the BRCIM’s website at www.bushfiresmonitor.vic.gov.au or the Department of Justice (DOJ) website at www.justice.vic.gov.au.

The BRCIM Act requires the BRCIM to monitor and review the progress of an agency in carrying out an implementation action against the Implementation Plan.

Following the tabling of the VBRC Final Report on 31 July 2010, the former government released Making Victoria Fire Ready – Implementing the Government’s Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission in October 2010 (the October 2010 Plan). The October 2010 Plan set out the state’s response to each of the VBRC’s final recommendations and was used by agencies as their guiding document until the release of the Implementation Plan.

Where evidence has been received from agencies in relation to actions specified in the October 2010 Plan, these actions have been addressed under the appropriate recommendation in this Progress Report.
CHAPTER 5

Approach taken by the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor in compiling the Progress Report

Consultation with stakeholders regarding implementation actions

During November and December 2010, the BRCIM met with the heads of the fire services and representatives from a number of departments and agencies involved in implementing the recommendations of the VBRC’s Final Report, including:

- Building Commission
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)
- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Department of Justice (DOJ)
  - Bushfires Royal Commission Coordinator
  - Emergency Services Policy and Support
  - Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC)
  - Strategic Communications Branch
- Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)
- Department of Primary Industries (DPI)
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE)
- Department of Transport (DOT)
- Energy Safe Victoria (ESV)
- Fire Services Commissioner (FSC)
- Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB)
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Victoria Police
- Victorian Bushfires Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA)
- VicRoads.

Further consultation was conducted with the following agencies and departments:

- Parks Victoria
- Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)
- Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA)
- Attorney General’s Department (AGD) (Commonwealth).

Among other things, these meetings confirmed the agreed timeframes between the BRCIM and each stakeholder for the implementation of actions. The BRCIM allocated a reference number to each implementation action for reporting purposes (for example 1(a), (b) etc). Agencies were advised of the BRCIM’s referencing system.
Approach taken by the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor in compiling the Progress Report

Subsequent to these meetings in December 2010, the BRCIM wrote to all stakeholders confirming lead agency responsibility and due dates for all actions. In total, the state committed to almost 300 individual implementation actions to be delivered over the next few years.

Between November 2010 and June 2011, the BRCIM received material as evidence from the state and its agencies in relation to the implementation of the actions. This material consisted of emails, reports, presentations, letters, memorandums, internal documents, maps, diagrams, press releases, meetings and media files. The BRCIM specified a deadline of 3 June 2011 for agencies to provide evidence of completion or progress to ensure that this report could be tabled in Parliament by 31 July 2011.

The BRCIM reviewed the material received against each of the actions to determine:

- the progress of the state in implementing the action
- the effectiveness of the method used by the agency in carrying out an action to implement the VBRC’s recommendations
- the efficacy of an action implemented.

As discussed in Chapter 3, while the BRCIM has powers to require information and powers of entry and inspection under the BRCIM Act to ensure all available evidence is gathered, it is pleasing to report that to date a high level of cooperation from all departments and agencies has made the use of these powers unnecessary.

The BRCIM wrote to all agency heads again in March and May 2011 reminding them of their obligations and to confirm the final date of 3 June 2011 for receipt of evidence for inclusion in this Progress Report. Evidence received after this date will be considered by the BRCIM in the Final Report of July 2012.

State Coordination and Management Council Bushfires Sub-Committee

In addition to reviewing the material submitted from the state and its agencies, the BRCIM attended the weekly meeting of the State Coordination and Management Council (SC&MC) Bushfires Sub-Committee as an observer.

The SC&MC Bushfires Sub-Committee, which is chaired by the Secretary of DOJ, develops policy to improve the state’s preparations for, and capacity to respond to, bushfires. All Secretaries and heads of relevant agencies are invited to attend meetings of the SC&MC Bushfires Sub-Committee.

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Regular attendees at the SC&MC Bushfires Sub-Committee include: Secretary of DSE, Chief Commissioner of Police, FSC, CEOs of MAV, VicRoads, CPA, MFB and VICSES, senior representatives of DPC, DTF, DPCD, DPI, DHS, DEECD, VBRRA and a representative from the Victorian Government Solicitors Office. Meetings were held weekly until 31 May 2011, and fortnightly thereafter.
Approach taken by the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor in compiling the Progress Report

Field Visits

The BRCIM undertook a series of field visits in March 2011 to a number of locations around Victoria. These visits gave the BRCIM an opportunity to inspect progress made by the state and its agencies in implementing the VBRC’s recommendations. Further, it allowed the BRCIM to communicate with operational and regional agency staff and local councils about their experience in preparing and planning for bushfires.

Visits included:

- Bendigo Incident Control Centre
- State Control Centre
- Kilmore Incident Control Centre
- Alexandra Incident Control Centre
- Ballarat Incident Control Centre
- Ararat Incident Control Centre
- Geelong Incident Control Centre
- Ballarat City Council
- Colac Otways Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Whittlesea Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Surf Coast Shire Council
- Parks Victoria, Colac
- Bushfire Compliant Homes at Marysville and Kinglake
- Healesville Neighbourhood Safer Place
- Whittlesea Neighbourhood Safer Place
- Buninyong Neighbourhood Safer Place.

Evidence gathered during these field visits has been included in this Progress Report where relevant. Further field visits are planned for later in 2011 and 2012.

The BRCIM also attended a number of briefings provided by agencies on a range of issues including:

- Township Protection Plans (TPPs) – CFA, DOJ and FSC (recommendation 4)
- TPPs in the structure of emergency management planning – OESC (recommendation 4)
- Fire Safe Kids program – CFA (recommendation 6)
- information technology specifications for Fireweb and FireMap – DSE (recommendation 16)
- demonstration of Convair CV-580 air tankers at Avalon Airport – DSE (recommendation 20)
- radio blackspots – CFA (recommendation 23)
- fuel reduction burning – DSE (recommendation 56).
Commonwealth Response

The VBRC Final Report includes five recommendations that relate wholly or partly to the Commonwealth and its responsibilities or capabilities. These recommendations are:

**Recommendation 7**

The Commonwealth lead an initiative through the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, facilitated by Emergency Management Australia, to develop a national bushfire awareness campaign.

**Recommendation 21**

The State, in conjunction with Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Defence, develop an agreement that allows Commonwealth aerial resources that are suitable for firefighting and support activities to be incorporated in preparedness plans and used on days of high fire risk.

**Recommendation 36**

The Commonwealth, states and territories continue to pursue the National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia, giving priority to producing a nationally consistent framework for data collection and evaluating current and proposed programs in order to identify and share best-practice approaches.

**Recommendation 61**

The State and Commonwealth provide for municipal councils adequate guidance on resolving the competing tensions arising from the legislation affecting roadside clearing and, where necessary, amend environment protection legislation to facilitate annual bushfire-prevention activities by the appropriate agencies.

**Recommendation 65**

The Commonwealth establish a national centre for bushfire research in collaboration with other Australian jurisdictions to support pure, applied and long-term research in the physical, biological and social sciences relevant to bushfires and to promote continuing research and scholarship in related disciplines.
Approach taken by the Bushfires Royal Commission
Implementation Monitor in compiling the Progress Report

On 25 October 2010, the Commonwealth provided a formal response to the VBRC Final Report, which can be downloaded from the Attorney General’s website at www.ag.gov.au. In its response, the Commonwealth stated that it would work actively to implement these recommendations. The Commonwealth also identified several other recommendations in the Final Report that relate primarily to the State of Victoria, but which are also relevant to the Commonwealth because of their national focus. The Commonwealth stated that it would assist the Victorian Government in the development of its implementation plan for those recommendations where there are joint interests.

The BRCIM contacted the Commonwealth AGD in January 2011 and offered the opportunity of incorporating material from the Commonwealth in relation to these recommendations in this Progress Report. The AGD accepted this offer. Detailed comments are included against the specific recommendations for the Commonwealth within this Progress Report. Updates are also included against several other recommendations in this report where the Commonwealth has an interest, specifically recommendations 6 and 48 of the VBRC Final Report and 4.8, 5.1 and 12.3 of the Interim Report.

Local Government

There are no specific recommendations in the VBRC Final Report for which local government has lead responsibility. The VBRC did make the point, however, that responsibility for preparing for fire and improving people’s safety is shared between individuals, fire agencies, commonwealth, state and local governments. The state accepted this proposition in the Implementation Plan.

The VBRC also acknowledged the disparate financial capacity of various municipal councils and the difficulty that many councils have in obtaining technical expertise in relation to bushfire. The VBRC stated:

In a perverse way, those councils that have the most pressing need to apply substantial resources and effort to make their communities more bushfire safe are in many cases those that are the least well resourced. The State should examine whether local government requires greater support, including funding, to ensure that individual councils have the capacity to implement the agreed changes.

The VBRC also recommended that the state establish mechanisms for helping municipal councils to undertake local planning that tailors bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities. The state responded to this in the Implementation Plan (refer to recommendation 3).

As observed in the Delivery Report, however, the BRCIM considers that progress is slow in this critical area of local community bushfire planning. The BRCIM will explore this matter consistent with the legislative responsibility under the BRCIM Act to monitor and assess ongoing efforts to improve the interaction between agencies and councils for the purposes of planning and preparation of bushfires. The BRCIM will report fully on this matter as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
CHAPTER 5

Approach taken by the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor in compiling the Progress Report

2010-11 Fire Season

As was noted in the Delivery Report in relation to the 2009-10 fire season, mercifully, the 2010-11 fire season was also relatively benign. Whilst this has been of enormous relief to the Victorian community, it has meant that many of the actions that have been implemented since the February 2009 fires have not yet been tested under extreme fire conditions. The ability of the BRCIM to comment on the efficacy of such actions has therefore been limited to a theoretical, rather than practical, assessment. The BRCIM recommends that as soon as there is cause for the actions to be tested under extreme conditions, full and independent evaluations are conducted. These evaluations will inform the BRCIM’s observations on the efficacy of the implementation of related implementation actions.

The FSC has requested that the Emergency Services Commissioner review the only major fire of the 2010-11 fire season at Tostaree. This fire started on 1 February 2011 and burnt an area of approximately 11,000 hectares with a perimeter of 111 kilometres before it was declared under control on 11 February 2011. The BRCIM will consider the findings from the Tostaree review as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

2010-11 Victorian Floods

Whilst Victoria was largely spared the devastation of fires in 2010-11, many communities were impacted by the worst floods in living memory. As a result, the government established the Review of the 2010-11 Flood Warnings and Response (the Floods Review) in February 2011. This Floods Review is also being led by Mr Neil Comrie AO, APM. The government noted that there are a number of similarities between the Floods Review and the role of the BRCIM, particularly in terms of the agencies and systems involved. The Floods Review is to be completed by 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will consider the findings and recommendations from the Floods Review as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

Fire fighters check water levels and traffic flow in northwestern Victoria during the January 2011 floods
Photo: CFA Strategic Communications
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Interim Report Recommendations

The BRCIM Act requires the BRCIM to report on the state’s progress in implementing any recommendations contained in the VBRC’s two Interim Reports which have not been fully carried out and are specified in the Implementation Plan.

Interim Report (August 2009)

The following table provides an update on the progress of the recommendations in the Interim Report, dated 17 August 2009, which were not fully implemented at the time of publication of the Delivery Report and are specified in the state’s Implementation Plan. Where available, an update from the Commonwealth is also provided. The full text of the Interim Report recommendations referred to below are contained in Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Report Recommendation</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>In Progress. The BRCIM sighted a report entitled, <em>Establishing a link between the power of fire and community loss: the first step towards developing a bushfire severity scale</em>, completed in response to recommendation 4.3. The BRCIM notes that this research was utilised by the National Fire Danger Rating (FDR) System Working Group in the review of the National FDR System for Scaled Bushfire Advice and Warnings in 2010. The BRCIM considers Interim Report recommendation 4.3 to be satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM notes that Australian Governments have agreed to conduct a research program to develop an improved basis for forecasting fire risk. This project will build on the research conducted by DSE and is due for completion in October 2013. This project is covered under recommendation 1 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 1(k) of this Progress Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>In Progress. Phase 2 of Emergency Alert (referred to as the National Emergency Warning System (NEWS) in the VBRC Interim Report) is due to be delivered by December 2011. This project is covered under recommendation 1 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 1(c) of this Progress Report. <strong>Commonwealth Update:</strong> During 2009-10, the Commonwealth provided $1.35 million to the states and territories to undertake research into the feasibility of developing a capability to deliver warnings to mobile telephones based on the location of the handset at the time of an emergency. This capability would be an enhancement to the existing telephone based emergency warning system Emergency Alert.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the research confirmed that development of a location based mobile warning capability was technically feasible, and as soon as possible after the end of the caretaker period following the Federal election on 14 September 2010, the Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP and the Attorney General, the Hon. Robert McClelland MP jointly announced that the Commonwealth would assist the states and territories to fund the establishment costs associated with the development of the capability. The procurement process is being led by Victoria on behalf of the states and territories.

The timing of the deployment of the location based mobile telephone emergency warning capability is subject to the state and territory negotiations with each of the three national mobile telecommunications carriers.

**Commonwealth Update:** The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) is introducing new graphical products that provide agencies with improved spatial and temporal resolution of fire danger indices, using fuel data provided by the agencies. This will assist agencies in determining the most appropriate fire danger rating and associated messaging on critical fire weather days.

The BOM is collaborating with researchers to develop improved measures of fire danger and is participating in a workshop on Fire Weather and Bushfire Risk in September 2011.

The BOM is also liaising with agencies in each jurisdiction to assist in the clarification of messaging in fire warnings from a fire weather viewpoint and identify the sources of bushfire advice for the public.

Refer also to Commonwealth comments in relation to the VBRC Final Report recommendation 7 in this Progress Report.
## Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Interim Report recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Report Recommendation</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>The review of Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMP) to ensure there is appropriate provision for relocation during bushfires, in particular, to indicate the location and arrangements associated with designated emergency relief centres will be addressed in the BRCIM’s Final Report. In response to recommendation 3 of the VBRC Final Report, councils have updated their MEMP to include community organisations working with vulnerable people and facilities where vulnerable people may be present and make available to Victoria Police. Refer to action 3(l) of this Progress Report for further details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>The Fire Safety Officer – Wildfire program has been expanded in line with the comments in the Delivery Report. This is covered under recommendation 1 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 1(l) of this Progress Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>The evaluation of community education products and services is ongoing. This project is covered in recommendation 2 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 2(d) of this Progress Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 and 8.2</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>The Victorian Fire Risk Register (VFRR) has identified risk and mitigation treatments in 61 of the state’s 79 municipalities and all six alpine resort areas. Metropolitan Melbourne municipalities that have minimal or no bushfire risk are not required to undertake the VFRR process. There are a further three municipalities implementing the VFRR which were scheduled for completion by 31 July 2011. VFRR products have been used in a number of ways throughout the state, including as an input to Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) and Municipal Fire Management Planning. The CFA, in consultation with Municipalities and Alpine Resorts, has now commenced updating all risk registers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>The review of the fire refuges policy is due to be completed in July 2011. This project is covered under recommendation 4 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 4(j) of this Progress Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 and 8.6</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) are now included as a shelter option in the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework. Additional NSPs continue to be designated and further work is being undertaken by the FSC to progress the NSP program. This work is covered under recommendation 4 of the VBRC Final Report and is discussed in action 4(b) of this Progress Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>The CFA reported to the VBRC on the results of the implementation and effectiveness of Township Protections Plans (TPPs) and NSPs on 31 May 2010. The BRCIM considers that this recommendation has been satisfactorily implemented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interim Report Recommendation | Status
--- | ---
9.1 and 9.2 | **In Progress.** There are a number of commitments in the VBRC Final Report that address incident control including recommendations 8, 14 and 17. Progress in implementing actions associated with these recommendations is reported at the relevant recommendation in chapter 7 of this Progress Report. The BRCIM notes that incident control, capacity and capability is fundamental to effective emergency response. As many of the recent initiatives in this area are yet to be tested under extreme fire conditions, this matter will be revisited as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

12.3 | **In Progress.** This recommendation will be revisited as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**Commonwealth Update:** The AGD on behalf of the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management is pursuing the following measures to improve the effectiveness of the Triple Zero Emergency Call Service (Triple Zero ECS) arrangements throughout Australia, particularly during large scale emergencies and disasters.

In 2010, the Triple Zero website hosted by the AGD was enhanced and relocated to a more accessible domain [www.triplezero.gov.au](http://www.triplezero.gov.au).

The AGD prepared a report in 2010 on issues for the Triple Zero ECS that would benefit from national collaboration between jurisdictions to improve the surge capacity of state and territory emergency service organisations. The report yielded two major conclusions. The first was the need to reduce non-genuine demand on the Triple Zero ECS. The second was the need to adopt best practice in emergency call handling.

Following the report on national collaboration, AGD commissioned a more detailed study to identify best practice and possible interoperability and compatibility of state and territory systems over the longer term. This report is expected to be provided to Commonwealth and state and territory emergency management ministers for consideration in July 2011.

A National Protocol for Tailored Recorded Voice Announcements coordinated by the AGD was ratified by all jurisdictions and Telstra in 2010. Tailored Recorded Voice Announcements were introduced for use in large scale emergencies and disasters and are designed to redirect Triple Zero callers not requiring immediate emergency assistance to appropriate information sources, such as a bushfire information line. Use of these announcements could assist to reduce the number of non-emergency calls to Triple Zero and provide a faster and more effective response to those with a genuine emergency need.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Interim Report recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Report Recommendation</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.3 (cont)</td>
<td>The Commonwealth, through AGD, prepared high level principles, which provide a framework to guide state and territory Triple Zero and information lines to improve crisis communication preparedness and response. The principles were endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management in November 2010. In addition to these initiatives, the Australian Communications and Media Authority has amended the Telecommunications (Emergency Call Service) Determination 2009 (the Determination) so that emergency services can, upon request to carriers, more readily be able to access information on the location of Triple Zero callers using a mobile phone. The Determination requires mobile carriers to provide emergency service organisations with the most precise mobile phone location information available for emergency calls made from mobile phones, in situations where a Triple Zero caller is unable to verbally report their location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interim Report 2: Priorities For Building In Bushfire Prone Areas (November 2009)

In August and September 2009, the VBRC heard evidence from a range of witnesses, including experts and lay witnesses, about the construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas, building controls and requirements for construction imposed by the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and Australian Standard AS3959 – 2009 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas (AS 3959-2009).

The VBRC released its Interim Report 2 – Priorities for Building in Bushfire Prone Areas in November 2009 identifying a number of critical matters warranting urgent attention.

Only one of the recommendations from the Interim Report 2, recommendation 5, was directed at the Victorian Government. The remaining recommendations were directed at the Commonwealth, Standards Australia and the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB).

Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB)

The ABCB is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia that includes representatives from the building industry. Established through an inter-government agreement signed by the Australian, state and territory governments in March 1994, its status was reaffirmed in April 2006.

The ABCB, among other things, promotes efficiency in the design, construction and performance of buildings through the National Construction Code (NCC). Further information on the ABCB is available from the ABCB’s website at www.abcb.gov.au.

National Construction Code (NCC) Series

The National Plumbing Regulatory Forum and the ABCB were asked by the Building Ministers, Forum (BMF) to work together to deliver consolidated building and plumbing codes in 2011 as part of a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement. The NCC has been developed that incorporates plumbing and drainage with the BCA.
CHAPTER 6

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Interim Report recommendations

The NCC Series comprises the BCA Commercial and Residential Volumes (Volume One and Two including Volume One Appendices) and the Plumbing Code of Australia which forms Volume Three. In future years all onsite construction regulation (building, plumbing, electrical and telecommunications) may be included in the NCC Series.

The NCC Series, BCA Volumes One, Two and Three commenced on 1 May 2011. Further details on the NCC is available from the ABCB website at www.abcb.gov.au.

Standards Australia

Standards are developed in Australia through Standards Australia, an independent, not-for-profit organisation recognised by the Australian government as the peak non-government standards making body. Standards Australia develops internationally aligned Australian standards in the national interest. As Standards Australia is not a part of government or a regulator, it does not enforce compliance or certification with Australian Standards. Further information on Standards Australia is available from the Standards Australia website at www.standards.org.au.

The BRCIM did not include details on the progress of the recommendations contained in Interim Report 2 in the Delivery Report. As indicated, only one recommendation was directed at the Victorian Government. All recommendations are now complete and this is detailed in the following table. The full text of the Interim Report 2 recommendations referred to below are contained in Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Report 2</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completed. This recommendation was directed at the ABCB. In the absence of technical standards for private bushfire shelters within the BCA, the ABCB announced on 24 September 2009 its intention to develop a national performance-based standard for the design and construction of private bushfire shelters. The ABCB developed and released a performance standard called Performance Standard for Private Bushfire Shelters 2010 (Part 1) on 30 April 2010. The standard was developed as a performance-based document and is available for download from the ABCB’s website at <a href="http://www.abcb.gov.au">www.abcb.gov.au</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Completed. This recommendation was directed at the ABCB and required an amendment to the BCA to include bunkers in the classes of buildings regulated by the BCA. State and territory administrations agreed that a ‘private bushfire shelter’ would be a Class 10c building for the purposes of their respective building control systems. The NCC Series, BCA Volumes One and Two 2011 was amended to incorporate the new definition of ‘private bushfire shelter’ and a new Class 10c in May 2011 (amendments made to BCA Volume One, section A and BCA Volume Two, parts 1.1, 1.3, and 2.3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Interim Report recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Report 2 Recommendation</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Completed.</strong> This recommendation was directed at the ABCB and required the ABCB to reference the national standard for bushfire bunkers in the BCA as soon as possible. The ABCB <em>Performance Standard for Private Bushfire Shelters 2010 (Part 1)</em> (the Bushfire Standard) has now been referenced in the NCC Series, BCA Volume Two, 2011 which commenced on 1 May 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Completed.</strong> This recommendation was directed to the Commonwealth, through the BMF and was considered at its meeting of 13 November 2009. Following the publication of the Bushfire Standard, this has now been referenced in the NCC Series, BCA Volume Two, 2011 which commenced on 1 May 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Completed.</strong> This recommendation was directed to the Victorian Government. The state introduced new interim regulations, Building Amendment (Private Bushfire Shelter Construction) Interim Regulations 2010, in November 2009 to prescribe the national standard for private bushfire shelters (bushfire shelters) as a minimum standard in Victoria. The state provided evidence of this in a submission to the VBRC in May 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Completed.</strong> This recommendation was directed to Standards Australia and required Standards Australia to publish amendments to Australian Standard AS 3959-2009 that included unmanaged grassland in the vegetation types and classifications and the use of sarking as a secondary ember protection. These matters were all included as part of amendment No. 2 to AS 3959-2009. Amendment 2 was published on 15 February 2011 and has been referenced in the NCC Series, BCA Volumes One and Two which commenced on 1 May 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Completed.</strong> This recommendation was directed to Standards Australia. In December 2009 <em>HB-36 – Building in Bushfire Prone Areas</em> was superseded by a new Standards Australia document, <em>HB 330-2009 Living in Bushfire Prone Areas</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Chapter 7 outlines the details of the BRCIM’s monitoring of the state’s progress in implementing the recommendations of the VBRC Final Report. This chapter is divided into three parts, being 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.

7.1 addresses the specific 67 recommendations of the VBRC in the following format:

**RECOMMENDATION**
The recommendation of the VBRC Final Report.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**
The implementation actions identified by the state in the Implementation Plan in response to the VBRC recommendation.

The BRCIM has assigned reference numbers to each implementation action for ease of reporting and the state committed to implement these actions within specified dates or timeframes. Where relevant, the BRCIM has referred to those dates as specified in the Implementation Plan. Where no dates are specified in the Implementation Plan, but the state has committed to complete an action within a timeframe, the following dates have been adopted:

- **fire season** - between 1 December and 31 March
- **before the fire season** - 1 December
- **after the fire season** - 1 December (to be completed prior to the start of the next fire season)
- **in 2011** - 31 December 2011 (to be completed by the end of the year)
- **ongoing** - 30 June (the action is ongoing and outside the scope of the Progress Report. The state will report on progress as of 30 June for that year).

Some implementation action dates have changed and these are indicated in the table with a footnote. Where provided, the reason for a date change has been included in the section on progress.

Implementation actions that were part of the October 2010 Plan but have since been completed and do not form part of the Implementation Plan have been reported against as agencies previously provided evidence. These actions are marked accordingly.

**PROGRESS**
The BRCIM’s monitoring of the state’s progress in implementing each action.

**FINDING**
The BRCIM’s finding and if appropriate, a comment on the efficacy of the implementation of the action. The BRCIM’s finding may include a statement that the action has been satisfactorily implemented; that the action has not been satisfactorily implemented; that the action is not due for completion until after the Progress Report is tabled; that the action will be revisited as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

7.2 addresses matters arising out of Chapter 8, Relief and Recovery, of Volume II of the VBRC Final Report.

7.3 addresses matters arising out of Chapter 9, Shared Responsibility, of Volume II of the VBRC Final Report.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

The State revise its bushfire safety policy. While adopting the national Prepare. Act. Survive. framework in Victoria, the policy should do the following:

1.1 enhance the role of warnings - including providing for timely and informative advice about the predicted passage of a fire and the actions to be taken by people in areas potentially in its path

1.2 emphasise that all fires are different in ways that require an awareness of fire conditions, local circumstances and personal capacity

1.3 recognise that the heightened risk on the worst days demands a different response

1.4 retain those elements of the existing bushfire policy that have proved effective

1.5 strengthen the range of options available in the face of fire, including community refuges, bushfire shelters and evacuation

1.6 ensure that local solutions are tailored and known to communities through local bushfire planning

1.7 improve advice on the nature of fire and house defendability, taking account of broader landscape risks.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(a) Refine and broaden bushfire safety policy</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(b) Review of bushfire safety policy</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(c) Emergency Alert Phase 2</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(d) One Source One Message – extending capability</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(e) Bushfire Alerts National Framework</td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(f) Sirens – OESC Review</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(g) 10 year evaluation of the Ferny Creek Community Siren</td>
<td>28/02/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(h) Total Fire Ban District – alignment with Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) weather districts</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(i) Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) – national review of FDRs</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(j) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BOM – Fire Danger Index</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Previous due date 31/03/2011.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(k) National Research Program – forecasting fire risk</td>
<td>14/10/2013</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(l) House defendability – extending safety officer program</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(m) OESC Research project ‘People’s experiences in bushfires’</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(n) Ensure integration of OSOM and Emergency Alert (NEWS)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(o) Review of Community Warnings</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRESS**

1(a) **Refine and broaden bushfire safety policy**

The OESC led the development of the Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework (the Framework), which is now the responsibility of the FSC. The Framework was finalised and published in December 2010. The Framework is available to download from the FSC website at www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au.

The stated aims of the Framework are to:

- develop a shared responsibility for bushfire safety between the state and local government, fire services and emergency management agencies, communities, households and individuals
- improve the level of public awareness of bushfire risk and the ability of people to make informed decisions to protect their lives
- support and improve local bushfire safety planning
- provide a range of options for individuals and communities to choose from depending on their personal circumstances and location that maximises their prospect of survival in a bushfire.

The Framework includes guiding principles for bushfire safety policy as well as the broad strategic framework for:

- promoting community awareness, understanding and action
- bushfire preparation and planning
- community information and warnings.

The Framework aims to provide guidance and direction for the use and application of the following bushfire safety options:

- leaving options and relocation destinations
- shelter options
- contingency shelter options
- last minute survival options.

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3 Previous due date 31/03/2011.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The FSC will conduct a review and evaluation of the Framework after each bushfire season. The FSC advises that further work to refine aspects of the Framework is being undertaken as part of this review process. The review will consider new developments and draw on research and evaluations in relation to bushfire planning, preparation and response.

In its Final Report, the VBRC observed that the responsibilities outlined in the bushfire safety policy should be shared between the state, municipal councils, individuals, household members and the broader community. This sentiment is mirrored in the COAG National Strategy for Disaster Resilience 2009. This strategy aims to bring together the views of all governments, business, non-government sector and the community on disaster resilience and can be downloaded from www.coag.gov.au.

The FSC met with the BRCIM to discuss the proposed FSC Fire Services Reform Action Plan as required under the Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010 (the FSC Act). One of the objectives in the draft reform program is to develop and implement a bushfire safety attitude and behavioural change program that changes community understanding of fire and builds upon the notion of shared responsibility and obligation between the community, fire services and agencies. This work will continue to build upon this notion of shared responsibility, and those themes expressed by the VBRC and COAG.

The BRCIM supports the concept of a Framework that brings together the state’s policy on bushfire safety in one comprehensive document, however, the success of the Framework in communicating the state’s bushfire safety policy to the Victorian community in its current format so far has been limited. Sections of the Framework in its current format are directed toward the emergency services sector, while others are directed toward the community. The target audience and purpose of the Framework should be clarified during the review process and the document made more user-friendly.

In addition, the BRCIM is not satisfied that the Framework clearly communicates adequate advice about leaving, shelter or survival options. This issue is discussed further in recommendation 4 (refer to action 4(a)).

Finding: The BRCIM supports the principle of shared responsibility and notes that the review of the Framework should explore this further and incorporate this principle into the bushfire safety policy and how best to communicate this to the Victorian community. The BRCIM will continue to monitor the ongoing development of policy on shelter options and will examine any review and evaluation of the Framework as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(b) Review of bushfire safety policy

As discussed in implementation action 1(a), the FSC advised the BRCIM that the annual review of the Framework will be conducted between July and August 2011. The review will also incorporate the revised community fire refuges policy and the findings of the review of the Tostaree fire of February 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 1(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(c) Emergency Alert Phase 2

The OESC, which is the national project leader of this initiative on behalf of Victoria, has advised that significant work is continuing to ensure the delivery of location based solution technology that meets the technical, legal, commercial and value for money requirements of this initiative. This technology will allow bushfire alerts to be sent directly to mobile phones based on the location of the SIM card at the time the alert is sent.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The BRCIM is concerned, however, that success in this matter appears to be largely dependant on reaching agreement with the commercial telecommunications carriers. Until such agreement is reached, a completion date for the project cannot be determined.

Given the critical role that warnings play in protecting life, the BRCIM considers this technology essential to ensuring public safety during emergencies throughout Australia. The BRCIM urges stakeholders at both Commonwealth and state levels, including commercial telecommunications carriers, to investigate all available options to ensure the delivery of this critical national capability.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 1(c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(d) OSOM – extending capability

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 1(d) is 30 June 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(e) Bushfire Alerts National Framework

In response to the VBRC’s Interim Report, a national framework for the provision of advice and warnings to the community in relation to bushfire was adopted in 2009 and applied by all states during the 2009-10 fire season.

The CFA advised the BRCIM that in 2010, the National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC) comprising representatives from the commonwealth and states, formed a taskforce to undertake a review of the national framework for bushfire advice and warnings. Following the completion of this review, a number of changes were made to the fire danger rating (FDR) system and messaging.

The CFA and the DSE have subsequently revised and finalised the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) for the 2010-11 fire season to reflect the changes flowing from the national review. This CAP includes templates for advice, watch and act and emergency warning messages.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 1(e) has been satisfactorily implemented.

1(f) Sirens – OESC Review

In the October 2010 Plan, the state committed to deliver a review of the implementation, use, community understanding and effectiveness of sirens for bushfire alerting by March 2011.

The OESC advised the BRCIM that this review has been incorporated into a broader project that will pilot the introduction of community warning sirens in two Victorian communities, Steels Creek and Olinda/Mount Dandenong. The project will explore the technology, social/human response to technology and governance of community warning sirens. This project is now due for delivery by 1 December 2011 and these changes were reflected in the Implementation Plan.

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 1(f) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(g) 10 year evaluation of the Ferny Creek Community Siren

The state committed to conducting an evaluation of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System. This project was due for completion by the end of February 2011. In April 2011, the OESC advised that the project was behind schedule. The evaluation was completed and a copy received by the BRCIM in May 2011.
The evaluation focused on how and why the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System has operated over the 10 year period and how it has contributed to the bushfire safety culture in the local community.

The evaluation revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System. For example, the evaluation found that the sirens had assumed iconic status in the local community and are considered an essential element of bushfire safety plans for residents who have chosen to “prepare, stay and defend” in an emergency. Further, it found that the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System has been supported and sustained by a dedicated local management committee who have been motivated to access funding and communicate with the community on siren matters.

However, the evaluation also revealed that only 65 per cent of residents reported being able to hear the sirens from both inside or outside their house when activated and that some residents mistakenly believed that the activation of the sirens should be perceived as a trigger to leave rather than a signal to seek more information.

The review concludes that the future of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System will largely depend on whether the committee and the emergency services agencies can establish a sustainable basis for their relationship and whether the committee can maintain its current workload and commitment to the system.

The BRCIM notes the positive coverage of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System in the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction paper on early warning practices for emergencies. The BRCIM commends the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert Committee for its work over the past 10 years and notes that this initiative provides an example of community members sharing responsibility for bushfire safety with the state and its agencies.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 1(g) has been satisfactorily implemented. This evaluation provides valuable insight into the long term operation of a community siren and could be considered as part of the broader sirens review being conducted by the OESC, as outlined in action 1(f), which is due to be delivered by 1 December 2011.

**1(h) Total Fire Ban District – alignment with Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) weather districts**

The CFA, DSE and BOM have addressed this matter and aligned total fire ban (TFB) district boundaries with the BOM weather districts. As a result, there are now nine combined total fire ban and weather districts in Victoria:

- Central
- North Central
- South West
- Wimmera
- Mallee
- Northern Country
- North Eastern
- West and South Gippsland
- East Gippsland.

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As a result of this alignment, there is an enhanced capacity for clear and definitive information regarding the new total fire ban districts and weather warnings in alignment with preventative controls on fire lighting and heat sources as part of the total fire ban declarations. Further, there is now greater clarity for the community in understanding which TFB district they reside in.

This alignment project was delivered prior to the 2010-11 fire season, enabling details of these changes to be communicated to the community through the 2010-11 FireReady media campaign (refer to recommendation 2 for more information on FireReady).

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 1(h) has been satisfactorily implemented and communicated to the community.

1(i) Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) – National Review of FDRs

In response to concerns expressed by the VBRC regarding the appropriateness of the FDR system, amendments were made to this system to reflect the VBRC’s recommendation of another rating level beyond “extreme”. A new level of “code red – catastrophic” was introduced for the 2009-10 fire season. The state committed to a comprehensive national review of this interim rating system after that fire season.

The national review was led by the Commonwealth AGD, with jurisdictional input at senior level. Relevant scientific and technical expertise was also considered during this review, including research led by DSE on bushfires and community loss (see Interim Report recommendation 4.3).

Victoria, under the auspices of the SC&MC Bushfires Sub-Committee, tasked OESC to establish and lead the Victorian FDR System Review Taskforce (with representation of all relevant departments and agencies) to provide input into the national review.

In addition to the review, a comprehensive examination and research into FDRs was agreed to be undertaken within a three year timeframe. The outcomes of this research will provide a scientific and research-based position on which to base any proposed major modifications to FDR systems or identify other more appropriate ways in which to advise the community on fire danger.

In summary, the outcome of the national review is that:

- a primary fire danger index – forest or grassland – should be determined for each weather district
- in forested weather districts, 100 Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI) is to remain as the single trigger for catastrophic/code red
- in grassland weather districts, the Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI) trigger points for determining
  - catastrophic/code red is GFDI 150
  - extreme is GFDI 100
- catastrophic/code red remains as part of the FDR continuum
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Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

- six levels of FDR to remain, with no changes to levels, colour or terminology
- messaging to be action oriented and simpler.

The above are subject to change when the research and comprehensive evaluation are completed within a three year timeframe.

As discussed by the BRCIM in the Delivery Report, several concerns had been raised about the inflexibility of the interim FDR system and also the use of the term “catastrophic” to describe the highest level of risk.

Although Victoria strongly supported the comprehensive research into the FDR, the outcomes of this research will not be available for at least three years. Therefore, Victoria has progressed some changes to address community concerns and to refine the FDR system to better respond to Victorian requirements while remaining aligned to the national position. These changes include the alignment of fire weather and TFB districts (refer to action 1(k)) and local government boundaries. In addition, future public messaging in Victoria will only reflect “code red” without the term “catastrophic”.

Greater flexibility has been introduced in the determination of code red situations. The State Controller, in certain circumstances, can use his or her discretion and professional judgement in determining code red days by considering the following factors:

- variable weather conditions including unstable atmosphere, lightning predicted, severe wind change expected
- changing fuel conditions – assessments suggest increased drying of grasslands or drought factor not indicative of forest fuel
- agricultural activity and crop condition
- fire in landscape – existing controlled or uncontrolled fires within the district
- uncontrolled ignitions – lightning activity predicted within the district or suspected arson activity occurring within district
- community risk – significant number of high risk communities within the district
- population movement – day of week and time of year is indicative of significant population movement into district
- major events – significant major event (involving increased population movement) occurring within district.

This approach remains consistent with the national system but provides some degree of discretion and consideration of other risk factors when determining code red days to accurately reflect the risk posed to communities on “bad” fire days.

The OESC conducted a review of the function and effectiveness of fire danger indicator signs on Victorian roads. Following the review, VicRoads and local councils have since installed over 340 FDR signs across municipalities. Arrangements are in place between councils and CFA brigades to ensure the signs are monitored and updated. During field visits the BRCIM sighted and was satisfied with the signage of FDRs in Victoria.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 1(i) has been satisfactorily implemented and notes that the FDRs have been appropriately adapted to suit the needs of the Victorian community while remaining in line with the national approach.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

1(j) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BOM – Fire Danger Index

The FSC and the Chief Fire Officers of the CFA, DSE and MFB have signed a MOU (effective from 7 December 2010) with the BOM for the provision of FDR forecasts for Victoria for the 2010-11 fire season.

The effect of this memorandum is that by 4.45pm each day, the BOM will provide the FSC and the Victorian fire services with a single FDR forecast for each forecast district for the next day and for the following three days and will not aggregate forecasts on a statewide basis. The BOM will review these forecasts on the following morning and provide the FSC and Victorian fire services with updated forecasts by 6.30am if necessary.

In the event that the FDR is likely to be rated as extreme for one or more districts for the next day, then preliminary estimates of the FDRs will be provided to the FSC and fire services no later than 12.30pm. Where the FDR forecast of the BOM indicates that a trigger for code red FDR may be reached for the next day, the duty fire weather forecaster will contact the State Fire Controller no later than 12.30pm. The State Fire Controller will provide a determination of the FDR for the next day and advise the BOM accordingly. A code red FDR will not be forecast for days two, three and four.

Where a significant change occurs to the information underlying an FDR forecast for the current day, the BOM will provide the fire services with an updated forecast for the day.

Other positive initiatives relating to this MOU are:

- the BOM will ensure that its public website contains:
  - fire weather warnings
  - fire weather forecast information for the public for one day ahead and updated on the morning of the next day. District forecasts will show the forecast district FDR. Township forecasts will show the forecast district FDR of the district in which the town is located
- the BOM will provide (through its registered user website for the CFA and DSE) detailed fire agency fire weather forecast information and warnings, including the FFDI and GFDI for each location for the next day and for the following three days
- CFA and DSE will ensure their websites contain maps of the four-day forecast with forecast districts colour coded to the forecast district FDR as derived from the BOM’s data. The FDR forecasts for day two, three and four will be marked as preliminary.

Finding: The signing of this MOU has provided significant improvements in the manner in which FDRs are determined and the way in which advice of these ratings are provided to the fire agencies and the broader community. The BRCIM considers action 1(j) has been satisfactorily implemented.

1(k) National Research Program – forecasting fire risk

Australian Governments have agreed to conduct a research program to develop an improved basis for forecasting fire risk. The Commonwealth AGD is coordinating this research under the auspices of the NEMC.

Finding: This action is due for completion in 2013. The BRCIM will revisit action 1(k) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

1(l) House defendability – extending safety officer program

In the Delivery Report, the BRCIM noted that the Fire Safety Officer program is a valuable resource which could be better utilised. The CFA significantly expanded this program, termed the Advice to Property Owners Program (Home Bushfire Advice Service), for the 2010-11 season.

The program provides individuals in high risk locations with specific advice to help them assess the level of risk on their property and to provide a range of options and appropriate actions that will assist in implementing a bushfire survival plan.

The program has been extensively advertised via the CFA website, Fire Ready Victoria meetings, local newspapers, pamphlets, letters to residents, magnets and advertising on cars.

Further, the CFA has developed a pilot program in the Grampians region. The program involves CFA Fire Safety - Wildfire Officers travelling door to door offering their services under the Advice to Property Owners Program.

As at 5 May 2011, 1432 individual households have been inspected as a result of the program.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 1(l) has been satisfactorily implemented.

1(m) OESC Research project ‘People’s experiences in bushfires’

The full title of this research project is ‘Preparing and Staying to defend during a Bushfire: An exploration and analysis of people’s experience of defending their property’. The project was initiated by the OESC to better understand the experience of residents in defending their property from bushfire. It is partly funded by the Commonwealth and has the support of the FSC and the CFA.

The OESC has advised that the initial completion date of 31 March 2011 was determined as a result of a miscommunication in the drafting of the Implementation Plan and that the project will be completed prior to the 2011-12 fire season.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 1(m) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(n) Ensure integration of OSOM and Emergency Alert (NEWS)

The CFA has advised the BRCIM that the integration of OSOM and Emergency Alert is progressing and will be implemented before the start of the 2011-12 fire season.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 1(n) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

1(o) Review of Community Warnings

In the Implementation Plan, the state committed to a review of policy, systems and procedures used by incident management teams for triggering, developing and issuing community warnings during a bushfire threat to ensure that they deliver timely, accurate, meaningful and action orientated warning to communities. The review is due for completion by June 2011 and the results will be incorporated into policy and procedures for the 2011-12 fire season.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 1(o) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 2**

The State revise the approach to community bushfire safety education in order to:

2.1 ensure that its publications and educational materials reflect the revised bushfire safety policy

2.2 equip all fire agency personnel with the information needed to effectively communicate the policy to the public as required

2.3 ensure that in content and delivery the program is flexible enough to engage individuals, households and communities and to accommodate their needs and circumstances

2.4 regularly evaluate the effectiveness of community education programs and amend them as necessary.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2(a) Review key publications</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(b) Enhanced Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool (HBSAT)</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(c) Bushfire Safety pocket guide provided to all CFA staff and volunteers</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(d) Ongoing evaluation of community education products and services</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(e) Integrated whole-of-government information campaign</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(f) Summer Fire campaign – Phase 1 Readiness and Planned Burning</td>
<td>Feb 2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(g) Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 2 Fire Operational</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(h) Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 3 Fire Recovery (only if required)</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>2(i) Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 4 Planned Burning</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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**PROGRESS**

2(a) **Review key publications**

In the Implementation Plan, the state committed to further strengthening its community bushfire education and engagement program to ensure the revised bushfire safety policy is effectively communicated to the community.

Several key publications were reviewed by the CFA prior to 1 December 2010.

The *FireReady Kit*, including two lift-out Bushfire Survival Plans for ‘Leaving Early’ and ‘Defending your Property’, was updated to incorporate new FDRs and associated key messages. The language in the kit was simplified, the former nine-part kit was consolidated into one document and the design was amended based on market research to include more fire imagery.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The pocket-sized *Members Quick Reference Guide* designed for fire agency personnel was redeveloped to be consistent with the updated FireReady Kit and revised key messages.

The *Know Your Total Fire Ban District* publication was amended to reflect the new TFB boundaries introduced in 2010.

The *Dairy Farmers Toolkit* and the *Horses and Bushfire* fact sheets and posters were redeveloped for consistency with the revised key messages in and the design of the FireReady Kit.

Since 1 December 2011, the CFA has updated the following publications:

- Bushfire Warnings and Information fact sheet
- Bushfire Survival Guide
- Grassfires fact sheet
- Bushfires and Your Pets fact sheet
- Preventing Haystack Fires.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

2(b) Enhanced Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool (HBSAT)

Following the 2009-10 fire season, a review was conducted of the Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool (HBSAT). As a consequence of this review, an e-learning company was engaged to improve the ease of navigation, useability and accessibility of the tool. The tool now meets accessibility standards with content delivered in Easy English, supported by an audio function that effectively guides users through the various stages of the tool. The HBSAT is now readily accessed through the CFA website and additional assistance in the completion of this assessment is available to users via a helpline (telephone 1800 068 611) or the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) (telephone 1800 240 667).

**Finding:** The BRCIM has inspected all documentation relating to the review and upgrading of the HBSAT and undertaken a test of this tool directly from the CFA website. The new version of the HBSAT is a significant improvement on the previous version and should result in a higher level of acceptance and application by property owners/residents. The BRCIM considers action 2(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

2(c) Bushfire Safety pocket guide provided to all CFA staff and volunteers

The *Members Quick Reference Guide* was developed and distributed to communicate key messages and elements of the new Bushfire Safety Policy Framework. The guide encouraged members to read and discuss the material with brigade or work colleagues to make sure they understood the changes. Key messages included TPPs, updated TFBs and FDRs, bushfire warnings, Bushfire Safer Precincts, NSPs and Bushfire Safety Site Assessments.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The guide was distributed to all CFA member households on 10 December 2010.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**2(d) Ongoing evaluation of community education products and services**

The Strategic Communications branch of DOJ coordinated an evaluation of all activity undertaken as part of the Summer Fire Campaign 2010-11. The evaluation, completed in May 2011, was informed by benchmark and tracking research and includes feedback from fire agencies and government departments.

Key findings included:

- 81 per cent of all Victorians and 48 per cent of Victorians living in high risk areas said the advertising made them do something to prepare for bushfires
- 90 per cent of all Victorians and 63 per cent of Victorians living in high risk areas said the advertising made them realise that writing down and practising a fire plan was vital for their safety
- 80 per cent of residents in high risk areas reported they were confident with their knowledge of the FDR system
- 75 per cent of all Victorians and 80 per cent of Victorians living in high risk areas said they feel more confident in travelling or holidaying in Victoria when they are aware of their fire risk
- 86 per cent of all Victorians and 90 per cent of Victorians living in high risk areas said the advertising was important in letting them know about the bushfire season and reinforcing the importance of being prepared
- 35 per cent of all Victorians and 75 per cent of residents in high risk areas recalled receiving the direct mail-out (discussed further at implementation action 2(f)), with one in four of those who recalled receiving the mail out saying they had taken action as a result of receiving it.

Learnings from the campaign will inform the 2011-12 Summer Fire Campaign. Strategic Communications will continue to coordinate annual evaluations of fire related material and advertising.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(d) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**2(e) Integrated whole-of-government information campaign**

The state commenced a long-term behavioural change and community engagement campaign in October 2009 with the 2009-10 Summer Fire Campaign.

The Fire Communications Taskforce is responsible for providing input into and facilitating the annual delivery of the Summer Fire Campaign. The taskforce is chaired by the Director, Strategic Communications Branch in DOJ and coordinates with CFA, DSE, MFB, DHS, OESC, Tourism Victoria, Parks Victoria, DEECD, MAV and other agencies to deliver a ‘one voice’ approach to the campaign.

The 2010-11 Summer Fire Campaign is discussed at implementation actions 2 (f)–(i).

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(e) has been successfully implemented.
2(f)  Summer Fire campaign – Phase 1 Readiness and Planned Burning

The 2010-11 Summer Fire Information and Education Campaign was designed to increase awareness and understanding about preparing for the fire season. The campaign targeted all Victorians with a focus on high risk communities, vulnerable people, holiday makers and multicultural communities.

The campaign reflected the direction flagged in the VBRC’s recommendations around community education and information and builds on the findings of research projects targeting both the general Victorian community and high risk communities.

The campaign was divided into four distinct phases. Phase 1, launched in October 2010, focused on bushfire preparation, holiday maker advertisements, “triggers to leave” advertisements and planned burning information.

Fire Action Week was held across Victoria between 10–17 October 2010 to raise awareness about bushfire risk and encourage people to prepare themselves for bushfire.

Advertisements encouraging people to prepare their bushfire plans commenced on 24 October 2010. The Spring Planned Burning campaign was run in October to create awareness around planned burning activities. Advertisements developed with Tourism Victoria were targeted to holidaymakers in December 2010 and January 2011 encouraging people to check weather conditions and pack water and woollen blankets in their cars. Advertisements were aimed at people in high risk bushfire areas encouraging them to know their triggers to leave the night before and early on code red days were aired during January and February 2011.

Direct marketing supported the advertising component of the campaign. Between October 2010 and January 2011, more than 1.8 million mail packs including an information brochure, wallet card and a poster featuring new TFB regions and information about FDRs were distributed to Victorian households. Approximately 105,000 information packs were sent to residents in high risk areas based on Victorian electoral role data. The package included a letter from the FSC, a FDR fridge magnet, a basic fire plan and a TPP.

In addition, the FireReady roadshow visited 40 high risk bushfire locations circulating fire awareness publications.

An evaluation of the 2010-11 Summer Fire Campaign was conducted and a report compiled by the Strategic Communications Branch of DOJ. This is discussed further at action 2(d).

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 2(f) has been satisfactorily implemented.

2(g)  Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 2 Fire Operational

Phase 2 of the Summer Fire Campaign covers the distribution of materials and specific information on code red and extreme days. The purpose of this phase was to provide umbrella support for whole-of-government communications to deal with imminent fire danger situations and to support communications around high risk fire days.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Pursuant to agreed protocols, code red advertising is triggered by the chair of the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC), Director of Communications, Victoria Police, to the Chair of the Fire Communications Taskforce (Director of Strategic Communications, DOJ).

Strategic Communications advised the BRCIM that code red radio and press advertising templates were updated during 2010-11 with changes in policy to cover:

- next few days
- tomorrow
- today
- cancellation of a code red day.

There were no code red days during the 2010-11 fire season and as a result, this advertising was not required.

Strategic Communications advised the BRCIM that in comparison to code red days, where both advertising and public relations (e.g. media relations and spokespersons) are triggered by EMJPIC, only public relations are utilised on extreme days.

There was one extreme day in the 2010-11 fire season on 31 December 2010. On this day, agencies utilised their regular public relations and communications channels to publicise the FDR. This included a media conference featuring the FSC and representatives from CFA, MFB and DSE.

The BRCIM considers it appropriate that the EMJPIC advertising script be reserved for code red days and that existing methods of communicating emergency warnings in conjunction with public relations activity is sufficient for extreme days.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(g) has been satisfactorily implemented.

2(h) Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 3 Fire Recovery - only if required

The purpose of Phase 3 was to provide information about how to access support services after a bushfire. A draft press advertisement and script were prepared but were not required due to a relatively benign 2010-11 fire season.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(h) has been satisfactorily implemented.

2(i) Summer Fire Campaign – Phase 4 Planned Burning

The purpose of Phase 4 was to raise awareness of public land fire preparation, prevention, suppression and recovery, to educate people on the benefits of planned burning and provide specific details on how and when planned burning will occur.

The campaign material was distributed across a range of media including in print, radio, TV, online and signage at burn sights. Further information on planned burning and community engagement is referred to at action 56(g).

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 2(i) has been satisfactorily implemented.
In its Final Report, the VBRC observed that,

_Bushfire awareness and knowledge are crucial if people are to be able to make informed decisions about protecting themselves and their belongings._

The BRCIM notes that there has been a significant investment in bushfire awareness and educational activities since the 2009 bushfires. The BRCIM acknowledges the state's commitment to informing and engaging the community on issues of bushfire safety.

A long term social marketing campaign is required to support behavioural change in people who are preparing for and responding to bushfires.

_The BRCIM considers it is important that the state build on the progress to date and will revisit this issue as part of the BRCIM Final Report._

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**RECOMMENDATION 3**

The State establish mechanisms for helping municipal councils to undertake local planning that tailors bushfire safety options to the needs of individual communities. In doing this planning, councils should:

3.1 urgently develop for communities at risk of bushfire local plans that contain contingency options such as evacuation and shelter

3.2 document in municipal emergency management plans and other relevant plans facilities where vulnerable people are likely to be situated—for example, aged care facilities, hospitals, schools and child care centres

3.3 compile and maintain a list of vulnerable residents who need tailored advice of a recommendation to evacuate provide this list to local police and anyone else with pre-arranged responsibility for helping vulnerable residents evacuate.

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**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3(a) Establish steering committee to determine funding allocation for local councils</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(b) Delivery model and administrative arrangements for local government resourcing and support</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(c) Review current guidance to councils (including clear relationships between TPPs, Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) and Municipal Fire Prevention Plans (MFPs))</td>
<td>30/11/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>3(d) Support councils to respond to local conditions (incorporation of new programs and processes)</td>
<td>31/08/2012</td>
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<td>3(e) Role of Municipal Fire Prevention Officers (MFPOs) in planning/prevention</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(f) Review of CFA Chief Officer’s delegation re fire prevention</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(g) Draft Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) for all 'at risk' municipalities in place</td>
<td>Oct 2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>3(h) TPPs (revised) for 68 existing plans in the 52 high risk bushfire areas – refer to recommendation 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(i) 140 TPPs in place – refer to recommendation 4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(j) Review MEMP Guidelines</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(k) Review emergency and fire management planning regimes</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(l) MEMP s reviewed and updated to include community organisations working with vulnerable people and facilities where vulnerable people may be present and make available to Victoria Police</td>
<td>01/05/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(m) Investigate the use of registers, review registers and contact lists, develop a proposed model and implementation plan for this recommendation</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3(n) Increase the level of support CFA provide to local government for fire prevention planning</td>
<td>30/11/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(o) CFA rolling review of municipal risk registers (interim recommendations 8.1 and 8.2)</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

The BRCIM notes that VBRC recommendation 3.3 does not appear to have been explicitly addressed by the state in the Implementation Plan. It is important that those vulnerable people who may not attend or receive council or state delivered services, or who do not reside in supported accommodation are also identified as far as possible. Identifying those who belong to this category of less visible vulnerable people provides a significant challenge. The BRCIM believes that the state should further consider the intent of the VBRC regarding recommendation 3 and implement appropriate actions accordingly.

PROGRESS

3(a) Establish steering committee to determine funding for local councils
3(b) Delivery model and administrative arrangements for local government resourcing and support

The VBRC recommended that the state establish mechanisms to assist councils to undertake local planning to meet the needs of individual communities. The FSC established a steering committee comprised of FSC (Chair), MAV and DPCD to determine funding allocations for local councils and for developing the delivery model and administrative arrangements for local government resourcing and support. The steering committee has determined the following:

- funding will be provided for 25 positions across 34 identified high risk bushfire municipalities. Nineteen positions will be responsible for one municipality, while six positions will work across two or more municipalities. The steering committee determined that this was the most appropriate way to ensure that funding is best matched to need across the state.
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- the new positions will focus on the implementation of VBRC recommendations at a municipal level, including the development of bushfire plans and initiatives, including the development of TPPs and the establishment of NSPs
- the initial appointment will be for 12 months. During that time, a review will be conducted to determine ongoing needs and workload. This review will determine if the initial 12 month period should be extended to a maximum period ending 2013-14 fiscal year. The steering committee determined that this was the most appropriate way to ensure that funding continues to be best matched to need across the state
- the DPCD will facilitate the payment of funds to councils once endorsed by the steering committee. Funding will be administered through a funding activity schedule linked to each council’s existing Local Government Header Agreement
- the MAV will provide project management including governance, selection and appointment processes and reporting on the performance of the program.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that although the steering committee was established and the funding, delivery model and administrative arrangements were finalised in late 2010, appointment of staff did not commence until April 2011. Twenty of the 25 positions had been appointed by 31 May 2011. The BRCIM is satisfied that actions 3(a) and 3(b) have been implemented, while noting the slow progress in filling these positions in the field.

3(c) **Review current guidance to councils (including clear relationships between TPPs, Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) and Municipal Fire Prevention Plans (MFPPs))**

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(c) is 30 November 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(d) **Support councils to respond to local conditions (incorporation of new programs and processes)**

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(d) is 31 August 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(e) **Role of Municipal Fire Prevention Officers (MFPOs) in planning/prevention**

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(e) is 30 June 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(f) **Review of CFA Chief Officer’s delegation re fire prevention**

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(f) is 30 June 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(g) **Draft Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) for all ‘at risk’ municipalities in place**

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(g) is October 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(h) and 3(i) are discussed under recommendation 4.

3(j) **Review MEMP Guidelines**
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During 2010, a steering committee comprising representatives of emergency services and councils revised the MEMP guidelines (which were originally issued in 2001) to better reflect contemporary needs and to ensure consistency with the VBRC recommendations. The revised guidelines were approved by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in January 2011 and have been incorporated into Part 6 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV). A copy of the EMMV can be downloaded from the OESC website at www.oesc.vic.gov.au.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the positive initiative to ensure that the EMMV is reviewed more regularly in future, commencing with a revision of the EMMV after the 2010-11 bushfire season. The BCRIM considers action 3(j) has been satisfactorily implemented.

3(k) Review emergency and fire management planning regimes

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(k) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(l) MEMPs reviewed and updated to include community organisations working with vulnerable people and facilities where vulnerable people may be present and make available to Victoria Police

DHS wrote to councils in November 2010 asking them to review and update their MEMPs to include a list of community service organisations working with vulnerable individuals and also facilities where vulnerable individuals were likely to be located. The Chief Commissioner of Police also wrote to councils in December 2010 requesting that these lists be made available to local police and other relevant agencies.

The BRCIM has examined the MEMPs of a sample of six councils. Whilst each council has identified the community organisations working with vulnerable people and facilities where vulnerable people may be present within their communities, there is a lack of consistency between councils regarding the groups of people on their lists. This arises from the absence of a clear definition of ‘vulnerable’.

Some councils, for example, have opted to include a broad range of facilities where vulnerable people may be present, such as schools, hospitals, holiday camps, out of school hours care centres and RSL Clubs, whilst others have opted for a much narrower list which may include only aged care facilities, child care centres, schools and community service organisations.

There is also a lack of consistency in relation to the information on the lists with some councils including after hours telephone numbers and mobile telephone numbers of key contacts, whilst others have included only landlines.

DH and DHS are leading the work to address the issues associated with the arrangements for vulnerable people.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that while action 3(l) has been implemented, there is a need for further clarification around the definition of vulnerable people to provide councils with greater guidance as to which groups need to be identified. The BRCIM encourages DH and DHS to progress their work in this area as a priority. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(m) Investigate the use of registers, review registers and contact lists, develop a proposed model and implementation plan for this recommendation

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 3(m) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
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3(n) Increase the level of support CFA provide to local government for fire prevention planning

Finding: The date for implementation of action 3(n) is 30 November 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(o) CFA rolling review of municipal risk registers (interim recommendations 8.1 and 8.2)

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 3(o) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The State introduce a comprehensive approach to shelter options that includes the following:

4.1 developing standards for community refuges as a matter of priority and replacing the 2005 Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice

4.2 designating community refuges - particularly in areas of very high risk - where other bushfire safety options are limited

4.3 working with municipal councils to ensure that appropriate criteria are used for bushfire shelters, so that people are not discouraged from using a bushfire shelter if there is no better option available

4.4 acknowledging personal shelters around their homes as a fallback option for individuals.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>4(a) Development of shelter options as part of revised Bushfire Safety Policy Framework</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(b) Allocation of grants to establish further NSPs and standards to progress the development of other shelter options</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td>4(c) Community testing of TPPs <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
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<td>4(d) Scenario testing of TPPS as part of programmed Level 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) training and exercising <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
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<td>4(e) Yearly exercise of TPPs (annual ongoing) <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
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<td>4(f) Completed TPPs on CFA website <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
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<td>4(g) TPP plans are progressively added to the CFA website <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4(h) Safer precincts - finalisation of methodology <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
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Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

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<td>4(i) Safer precincts - communication strategy for safer precincts completed <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(j) Fire Refuges - 2005 policy replaced with revised policy</td>
<td>31/07/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4(k) Fire Refuges - performance standards developed and incorporated into regulations for building fire refuges</td>
<td>31/07/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4(l) Fire Refuges - development of national standards and further amendment of building regulations</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(m) Pilot community fire drills in high risk areas – refer to action 5(g)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

4(a) Development of shelter options as part of revised Bushfire Safety Policy Framework

In the Final Report, the VBRC recommended that the state develop a comprehensive approach to shelter options.

The Implementation Plan identifies the following shelter options:

- actively defending a well prepared home
- private bushfire shelters
- community fire refuges
- NSPs
- privately arranged places of shelter
- last minute survival options.

The Implementation Plan also refers to leave early destinations, described as a place away from high bushfire risk areas where people can relocate to on days of bushfire threat rather than a shelter option. Leave early destinations are discussed further at implementation action 4(h).

Section 6 of the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework (the Framework) provides guidance for the use and application of the bushfire safety options, including leaving and relocation options, shelter options, contingency shelter options and last minute survival options.

The Framework includes five appendices on the following topics:

- Appendix A: Leaving early options
- Appendix B: Leave early destinations
- Appendix C: Defending a well prepared home
- Appendix D: Private bushfire shelters (bunkers)
- Appendix E: Neighbourhood Safer Places.

There is no appendix for private places of shelter or last minute survival options. These are considered to be individual contingency options for which the state will only provide general information.

The FSC has advised that the Framework will be reviewed following the 2010-11 fire season.
Finding: The BRCIM is not satisfied that the Framework clearly communicates advice about leaving options, shelter options or survival options. Section 6 does not provide clear, workable guidance to community members on the suite of options available to them in preparing their bushfire safety plan.

In addition, the BRCIM is not satisfied that the state’s response to recommendation 4 addresses the spirit of the recommendation itself. The VBRC recommended that the state develop a comprehensive approach to shelter options, with a particular focus on community refuges and bushfire shelters.

The BRCIM notes that a review of community fire refuges policy will be undertaken once the interim performance standard is finalised in July 2011 (refer to action 4(j)).

The BRCIM notes that the FSC will review the Framework in 2011. The BRCIM will revisit action 4(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

4(b) Allocation of grants to establish further NSPs and standards to progress the development of other shelter options

While this action is not due for completion until 1 December 2011, the FSC provided a progress report to the BRCIM advising that CFA and MAV established two taskforces to identify and assess potential NSP sites in some of the state’s high bushfire risk areas where it has proven difficult to find suitable sites. One taskforce concentrated on the Dandenong Ranges, while the other looked at a number of townships in high risk areas, including the Macedon and Otway Ranges.

The taskforces identified 27 sites that, once works including improvement to access and egress, vegetation management and building renovations are completed, may be suitable for designation as NSPs. Consent from land owners may also be required.

The taskforces also identified some locations where no potential NSP sites could be established. The FSC has advised that work will continue with these councils to explore other bushfire safety options.

The FSC is working with MAV, CFA, DSE and DPCD to determine the allocation of grants for works to be undertaken to facilitate the designation of NSPs in high risk areas where it has proved difficult to identify suitable NSP sites.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress to date and will revisit action 4(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

3(h) TPPs (revised) for 68 existing plans in the 52 high risk bushfire areas

3(i) 140 TPPs in place

4(c) Community testing of TPPs

4(d) Scenario testing of TPPs as part of programmed Level 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) training and exercising

4(e) Yearly exercise of TPPs (annual ongoing)

4(f) Completed TPPs on CFA website

4(g) TPP plans are progressively added to the CFA website

Actions 3(h) and (i) and 4(c)-(g) collectively are actions that appear in the October 2010 Plan in relation to TPPs. These actions are all addressed in the section below on TPPs.
Township Protection Plans (TPPs)

The BRCIM has identified several issues with the terminology, development and implementation of TPPs. At the time of writing, the BRCIM considers that the TPP process does not effectively engage the community or local government in planning for emergencies. Several councils visited by the BRCIM communicated their frustration at the lack of consultation in the development of TPPs in their municipality. Feedback from these councils also indicated that the community lacked awareness and understanding of TPPs.

The BRCIM is also concerned that the current “Part 1 - Community Information” section of TPPs does not provide a comprehensive ‘plan’ for residents and tourists in an emergency and, at best, only provides a map of the area. Some councils advised the BRCIM that TPPs only contain generic information that is not appropriately tailored to reflect local conditions. In addition, no clear advice had been provided as to how TPPs fit within the broader IFMP and MEMP frameworks.

The BRCIM raised these concerns in a meeting with the CEO of the CFA, the FSC and the Bushfires Royal Commission Coordinator of DOJ, in March 2011. The BRCIM suggested at this meeting that there needed to be greater consistency and accountability within the TPP model. Further, the BRCIM discussed the limitations of the TPP framework in involving communities in planning for bushfires. The BRCIM also stressed the need and importance of extensive engagement with local government in relation to TPPs.

The CFA responded to the BRCIM on this matter and advised that the BRCIM’s previous comments have been utilised as drivers for change and continuing development of the TPP model. Specifically, TPPs will be revised to include:

- emphasis on actions the community can undertake on high risk days
- the need for a stronger focus on planning what to do in an emergency
- public access to all relevant information
- community and brigade participation in the planning process
- a consistent approach to TPPs across Victoria.

The CFA has provided evidence to the BRCIM that the following actions will be taken to give effect to these considerations:

- the FSC and DOJ will lead a review of emergency and fire management planning arrangements in Victoria
- TPPs will be aligned with the IFMP structures
- a community risk analysis field advisor has been engaged and will provide program governance across Victoria, ensuring consistency and quality control is maintained across the regions
- a content management system is being developed to assist in capturing local action based planning by providing a set of questions and prompts
- facilitation capability will be enhanced so community consultation staff are better able to elicit localised/action based information for the TPPs
- a community engagement and communications plan will be developed at state and regional levels to increase the involvement of communities and brigades in the development of TPPs
- TPPs will now be included in municipal fire/emergency management plans.
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The TPP State Reference Group (led by the CFA and FSC in collaboration with MAV, Victoria Police, DSE, DOJ and local government) has redeveloped the TPP template. It is now more action oriented and incorporates more locally relevant information. The CFA advised the BRCIM that it will develop 29 TPPs using the new template before the coming fire season. Following the 2011-12 fire season, the CFA will redevelop the existing 111 TPPs using the new template. This new commitment is outlined in the Implementation Plan.

The BRCIM has sighted the new template and notes that the work being undertaken to improve the TPP model represents a significant improvement in the product.

In its response to recommendation 4 in the October 2010 Plan, the state committed to a number of actions in relation to TPPs, including the testing of TPPs at community and operational levels and including a list of TPPs on the CFA website.

While these commitments do not appear in the Implementation Plan, the BRCIM notes that they are important and should be incorporated into the redeveloped TPP model. In particular, the BRCIM considers the testing of TPPs to be an important part of ensuring their effectiveness and utility at the community and operational levels. The BRCIM considers that in addition to the inclusion of TPPs in Regional Joint Fire Agency Level 3 IMT exercises, a greater commitment to testing TPPs, particularly at a community level, is desirable.

Finding: The BRCIM is unable to comment on the status of these implementation actions as further development of the TPP process is ongoing. The BRCIM will examine and revisit the development and efficacy of the revised TPP model as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

4(h) Safer precincts – finalisation of methodology

In the Final Report, the VBRC noted that it had not reached any conclusions about the adaptation of the South Australian concept of bushfire safer precincts in the Victorian context. However, the VBRC encouraged the state to investigate the merits of such a concept.

The selection methodology for identifying bushfire safer precincts was developed by the CFA in consultation with DSE and the MFB in late 2010. The BRCIM has sighted this methodology.

In the Framework, bushfire safer precincts are called “leave early destinations” as it was considered that this terminology would cause less confusion with other existing concepts such as NSPs.

“Leave early destinations” are considered to be “relocation destinations” for people who leave early on high risk days. “Relocation destinations” are one of five safety options described in the Framework.

In the Implementation Plan, the state committed to implementing the bushfire safer precincts methodology and communicating this to the community prior to the 2011-12 fire season (refer to recommendation 1 for further details).

The FSC advised that work is underway and market research is being conducted in relation to the concept of bushfire safer precincts. In particular, the terminology will be reviewed to better reflect their purpose and prevent confusion with NSPs.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 4(h) has been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM acknowledges that work is continuing in relation to bushfire safer precincts and supports the review of the terminology to avoid confusion. The BRCIM will revisit this new action, namely the implementation of the methodology and identification of bushfire safer precincts, as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
**Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations**

4(i)  **Safer precincts – communication strategy for safer precincts completed**

As discussed under action 4(h), while the methodology for identifying bushfire safer precincts has been completed, it has not yet been implemented. In the Implementation Plan, the state committed to implementing and communicating the methodology to the community prior to the 2011-12 fire season.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the state’s commitment to implement and communicate the safer precincts methodology to the community before the 2011-12 fire season. The BRCIM will revisit action 4(i) as part of the BRCIM in Final Report.

4(j)  **Fire Refuges – 2005 policy replaced with revised policy**

In its Final Report, the VBRC expressed its disappointment at the lack of action that had been taken by the state in updating the fire refuges policy.

As discussed at actions 4(k) and (l), interim performance standards are being developed for Victoria as an interim measure to be used until the national performance standards for community fire refuges are finalised. It is expected that the Victorian standards will be finalised by July 2011 and the FSC advises that the fire refuges policy will be reviewed and finalised at this time.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 4(j) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

4(k)  **Fire refuges – performance standards developed and incorporated into regulations for building fire refuges**

4(l)  **Fire refuges – development of national standards and further amendment of building regulations**

The state has been working with the ABCB to develop building standards for community refuges, which are scheduled for completion in 2012. In the interim, DPCD and the Building Commission have been developing performance requirements for community fire refuges for use in Victoria until the national requirements are introduced.

The OESC advised the BRCIM that the state plans to amend the Victorian Building Regulations 2006 by July 2011 to incorporate the performance requirements developed by DPCD and the Building Commission.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will monitor the delivery of actions 4(k) and 4(l) and will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

4(m)  **Pilot community fire drills in high risk areas**

**Finding:** This action is now covered under recommendation 5 (action 5(g)).
RECOMMENDATION 5

The State introduce a comprehensive approach to evacuation, so that this option is planned, considered and implemented when it is likely to offer a higher level of protection than other contingency options. The approach should:

5.1 encourage individuals - especially vulnerable people - to relocate early
5.2 include consideration of plans for assisted evacuation of vulnerable people
5.3 recommend ‘emergency evacuation’.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>5(a) Guidelines for evacuation included in the State Emergency Response Plan</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>5(b) Guidelines to be included in a joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with fire agencies</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(c) Provide evacuation manager training to Victoria Police members</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(d) Review the Interim Evacuation Guidelines, ensuring they are compatible with arrangements for the identification of vulnerable people in high risk areas</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(e) Develop guidelines on the preparation of vulnerable people for evacuation</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>5(f) Revise joint SOP 3.12 and community warnings to reflect the new Guidelines</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>5(g) Plan community fire drills in two high risk areas</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

5(a) Guidelines for evacuation included in the State Emergency Response Plan

Victoria Police developed interim evacuation guidelines which were endorsed by the Victoria Emergency Management Council on 21 October 2010. These interim guidelines have now been included in the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) at Appendix 9. The SERP is part 3 of the EMMV and can be downloaded from the OESC website at www.oesc.vic.gov.au.

The guidelines aim to establish an all hazards, all incidents framework for a coordinated multi-agency response to a significant emergency in an area where an evacuation has been recommended. The guidelines provide a guide for decision makers, articulate the five stages of the evacuation process and define the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders during evacuation.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Specific reference is made in the guidelines to the special needs of vulnerable people. This issue is discussed in more detail in the response to recommendation 3 in this report. The guidelines also address circumstances requiring “emergency evacuation” as recommended by the VBRC.

The interim evacuation guidelines were scheduled for review in February 2011, following the 2010-11 fire season. Due to significant flood events in January and February 2011, the multi-agency review was postponed and commenced in March 2011. New guidelines are scheduled to be in place by 31 October 2011, replacing the interim guidelines.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 5(a) has been satisfactorily implemented. Further, the BRCIM will revisit the review of these guidelines as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

SOPs are reference documents used by emergency service organisations in specific circumstances. They specify the actions that should be applied or taken to produce a desired outcome. In certain circumstances, agencies sign joint SOPs.

**5(b) Guidelines to be included in joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) fire agencies**

Joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) (J3.12) *Evacuation During Bushfires* was approved by the fire services and the FSC on 13 December 2010. This joint SOP is based on the interim evacuation guidelines and addresses the planned movement of people from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to safer areas and eventual return. The procedure in this joint SOP provides that:

- the Incident Controller is responsible for deciding whether or not to recommend evacuation
- appropriate matters outlined in the joint SOP are to be considered in making decisions relating to evacuation
- effective communication of evacuation decisions to all relevant parties is required
- Victoria Police are responsible for implementing the evacuation.

The schedules attached to this joint SOP provide a flow chart and detailed considerations in a checklist to inform decisions on evacuation and appropriate documentation to record the details of this decision making process. Schedule 2 of the joint SOP requires, inter alia, that specific consideration be directed to the identification of vulnerable groups or individuals.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 5(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

There have been no instances since the joint SOP was enacted where evacuation has been a necessary response to a bushfire incident. As a result, no evidence is available to enable an evaluation of the efficacy of actions 5(a) and (b) in a bushfire scenario.

The BRCIM notes that evacuations were conducted in response to severe flooding events, which occurred in Victoria in late 2010 and early 2011 and are currently under review. The Victorian Floods Review will explore this issue in some detail in its Final Report due on 1 December 2011.
**Chapter 7.1**

**Township evacuation planning and testing**

Victoria Police, with the assistance of the CFA, conducted a community evacuation exercise in Breamlea in October 2010. Forty-seven residents and 10 CFA volunteers attended the evacuation assembly area at Connewarre Reserve. Feedback from those who attended indicated a high level of satisfaction in relation to the value of the phone warning message (although many thought the message should be sent to mobile and landline numbers), the evacuation route, the evacuation plan map and the appropriateness of the assembly area.

The state, in its Implementation Plan, has committed to conducting fire drills in two high risk areas before the end of 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers it valuable that further community evacuation exercises be conducted in other high bushfire risk areas, particularly in those townships where it is not possible to designate an NSP. The BRCIM considers it important that these exercises should take into account the needs of vulnerable people. Further comment about vulnerable people and bushfire safety can be found at recommendation 3.

**5(c) Provide evacuation manager training to Victoria Police members**

**5(d) Review the Interim Evacuation Guidelines, ensuring they are compatible with arrangements for the identification of vulnerable people in high risk areas**

**5(e) Develop guidelines on the preparation of vulnerable people for evacuation**

**5(f) Revise joint SOP 3.12 and community warnings to reflect the new Guidelines**

**5(g) Plan community fire drills in two high risk areas**

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers it imperative that actions 5(c), (d), (e), (f) and (g) are implemented prior to the 2011-12 fire season. The BRCIM will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

### RECOMMENDATION 6

Victoria lead an initiative of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs to ensure that the national curriculum incorporates the history of bushfire in Australia and that existing curriculum areas such as geography, science and environmental studies include elements of bushfire education.

### STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<td>6(a) Amendments to national curriculum to include history of bushfire in Australia and bushfire education</td>
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<tr>
<td>6(b) Development of Victorian teaching and curriculum resources linking bushfire education</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>6(c) Updated Fire Safe Kids Bushfire Education program to be developed and delivered</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>6(d) CFA mobile education units in service</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

6(a) Amendments to national curriculum – bushfire education

In accordance with the commitments made in the October 2010 Plan, the DEECD in October 2010 initiated an out-of-session paper titled Bushfire Education in the Australian Curriculum for consideration by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). This paper included a recommendation that the MCEECDYA note and support the recommendation of the VBRC that bushfire education be included in the new Australian curriculum.

All states and territories have now responded to the proposal to MCEECDYA and with the exception of Queensland, all jurisdictions have supported the proposal in principle. Queensland has declined to support this proposal on procedural grounds and has recommended the development of a set of principles by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) that would facilitate the consideration of proposed amendments to the Australian curriculum.

Following the response to the Victorian proposal from all states and territories, ACARA is currently considering how bushfire education might be included in the national curriculum.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) has commenced the development of teaching and learning resources to support bushfire education programs in schools.

The BRCIM has also sighted a letter from the Victorian Minister for Education to the Chair of ACARA. In this letter:

- the Victorian Government advised that it has funded the development of appropriate bushfire education resources by the VCAA and that these resources are available to all states and territories
- it is requested that ACARA give consideration to the inclusion of the study of natural disasters in the Australian curriculum, within the history, geography and science curricula.

Finding: The BRCIM considers that Victoria has taken appropriate steps to satisfactorily implement action 6(a). However, the BRCIM will continue to monitor progress of this initiative and will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update on recommendation 6.

*The AGD has commenced consultations with ACARA and the Victorian DEECD to further progress disaster education, including bushfire, in the national curriculum for schools.*

*The VCAA has identified through its research that there are only limited curriculum and education resources that address the psychological responses to bushfire and this could be a focus for the future development of curriculum support materials, as one of a suite of disaster resilience products.*
6(b) Development of Victorian teaching and curriculum resources linking bushfire education

DEECD has commissioned the development of teaching and learning materials to ensure Victorian students acquire knowledge and skills to enable them to learn about, prepare for, respond to and recover from bushfires. The materials will be available in four modules including:

Module 1: Early Years (pre-school)
Module 2: Lower primary (Years Prep-3)
Module 3: Middle and upper primary (Years 4-6)
Module 4: Secondary (Years 7-10)

The materials will be delivered as an online teaching and learning resource. This Bushfire Education website will go live on 1 July 2011, with material being progressively loaded between 1 July and 13 July 2011. Full interactive digital modules, which are still in development, will be loaded in September 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM is satisfied that this project is progressing and will revisit action 62(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

6(c) Updated Fire Safe Kids Bushfire Education program

To allow for the inclusion of updated messages from the revised Bushfire Safety Policy and the updated FDRs, the CFA moved the delivery of the Brigades in Schools program, renamed Fire Safe Kids, to 31 January 2011. This timeline ensured that all material would be updated to reflect current policy and has also allowed for the program to fit in with school year lesson planning, which would have been problematic with a launch on 31 October 2010.

In 2009, the CFA developed the Fire Safe Kids Bushfire Awareness Education Kit, including activity sheets, posters and lesson plans, for incorporation into the then Brigades in Schools program.

The program content was updated over the course of the 2010-11 fire season to reflect the changes to the Bushfire Safety Policy, FDRs and to align it with the broader communications strategy for educating the community. This includes updates to program content and to the methodologies behind running the lessons and sessions. The CFA has commenced training brigade based presenters in the new program and it is anticipated that all 800 presenters will receive training by December 2011.

The Fire Safe Kids program was developed in time for inclusion into the 2011 school year. The program is available to primary schools in the government, Catholic and independent sectors throughout Victoria. At the time of writing, there have been over 1100 schools and pre-primary centres that have registered for the CFA Fire Safe Kids Program. These schools and centres will be visited throughout 2011 according to where fire safety fits in best with each school’s lesson planning and curriculum.

Finding: The BRCIM has examined all materials related to the Fire Safe Kids Bushfire Education program and considers this material to be most appropriate for this program. Further, the BRCIM considers that it was an appropriate decision for the CFA to delay the introduction of this program until the commencement of the 2011 school year to ensure that the program reflected significant changes to the state’s Bushfire Safety Policy. The BRCIM considers action 6(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

6(d) CFA mobile education units in service

The CFA advised the BRCIM that mobile education bushfire units are being designed to provide curriculum based bushfire awareness and safety education to Victorian primary and secondary school students. The units will be utilised throughout the state, promoting important safety information about preparedness, planning and response at the appropriate school age level.

Outside of the education program, the mobile education bushfire units will be used for field days, fetes, brigade open days, the CFA state championships, Fire Ready Victoria activities and Fire Action Week.

Finding: The date for implementation of action 6(d) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Commonwealth lead an initiative through the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, facilitated by Emergency Management Australia, to develop a national bushfire awareness campaign.

Recommendation 7 is directed to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update:

A national approach to community education and messaging, including changes to the Fire Danger Index, was agreed by the NEMC prior to the 2010-11 fire season. A complete review of the fire danger rating system, including the science behind it, is currently underway but this will take some years to complete. The outcomes of this review will strongly inform a national bushfire awareness campaign, which has been deferred until completion of the review. Refer also to recommendation 5.1 of the VBRC Interim Report.5

The implementation of this recommendation is ongoing.

5 Refer to Chapter 6 of this Progress Report for further information on the Interim Report recommendations.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7(a) Development of national bushfire awareness campaign</td>
<td>31/11/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

**7(a) Development of national bushfire awareness campaign**

The state supports recommendation 7, while noting that it is directed to the Commonwealth. The state is working in conjunction with the NEMC and its sub-committees to progress this recommendation.

Victoria is represented on the NEMC by the DPC and DOJ. At its meeting on 16 September 2010, the NEMC agreed to take no action at that time in relation to this recommendation. DPC has requested that the status and next steps in relation to these recommendations be considered at the scheduled meeting of NEMC on 6 July 2011.

**Finding:** Although the Commonwealth has responsibility for the implementation of this recommendation, the BRCIM will continue to monitor progress in developing a national bushfire awareness campaign. The BRCIM will revisit action 7(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 8**

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures to require the following

8.1 that at locations that attract preparedness levels A or B there be a full incident management team under the leadership of an accredited level 3 Incident Controller in position by 10.00 am on days of code red fire danger and a core incident management team (eight personnel) under the leadership of an accredited level 3 Incident Controller in position by 10.00 am on days of extreme fire danger

8.2 that a full level 3 IMT be led by a level 3 Incident Controller unless the State Controller determines otherwise.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8(a) 43 Incident Control Centres upgraded</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(b) 155 Divisional Command Centres upgraded</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(c) Joint SOP of revised IMT Preparedness Arrangements</td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(d) Review of joint SOP – IMT Preparedness Arrangements</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(e) Code red and extreme day IMT/ICC response arrangements/procedures in place</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8(f) MFB joint training exercises to ensure there is an “all hazards” approach to improving major response to fires <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

8(a) 43 Incident Control Centre’s upgraded

Since the fires of February 2009, DSE and CFA have been working together to determine and document agreed minimum standards for Level 3 ICCs. These were jointly published by the Chief Officers on 15 September 2009. Upgrades to meet these minimum standards were conducted throughout 2010. The 43 level 3 ICCs that operated during the 2009-10 fire season were reviewed in the lead up to the 2010-11 fire season. This led to the removal of redundant level 3 ICCs at Benalla, Maryborough and Mount Gambier. All DSE and CFA personnel were advised of these changes in writing by the Chief Officers in October 2010.

Following joint internal inspections DSE and CFA engaged an independent auditor to inspect all 40 Level 3 ICCs across the state during October 2010 and February 2011. These audits led to subsequent (minor) rectification works as required. The key finding arising from this independent audit process is the need for both the CFA and DSE to conduct ongoing testing and auditing as these facilities were not tested operationally via the audit process.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 8(a) has been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM also understands that the FSC is working with DSE and CFA to develop an ongoing Level 3 ICC testing and auditing regime that will enable the functionality of Level 3 ICCs to be confirmed annually prior to each fire season. The BRCIM considers this is essential, given that ICCs are not generally purpose built facilities. They are existing offices, which vary significantly in functionality and are only occasionally operational as Level 3 ICCs.

8(b) 155 Divisional Command Centres upgraded

At the time of writing this report, the CFA advised that only 125 of the 155 Divisional Command Centres that were due to be upgraded by 30 March 2011, had been completed. Completion is defined as meeting minimum capacity as described in the minimum standards prescribed by the CFA Chief Officer. The 30 centres that do not meet the standards are currently undergoing upgrade works. The CFA advised the BRCIM that they expect 154 upgrades to be completed by 30 June 2011.

The BRCIM notes that the CFA does have the capacity to deploy up to 10 Mobile Divisional Command caches. These caches provide the capacity to set up a Divisional Command facility at CFA brigades or other appropriate facilities anywhere in the state from the CFA State Logistics Centre within 24 hours.

Finding: The BRCIM is not satisfied with the slow progress in completing these upgrades. It is critical that they are completed as soon as possible and certainly prior to the 2011-12 fire season. The BRCIM will revisit action 8(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

8(c) Joint SOP of revised Incident Management Team (IMT) Preparedness Arrangements

A joint SOP (J2.03) Incident Management Teams – Readiness Arrangements was signed between CFA, DSE and the FSC on 13 December 2010. This joint SOP defines locations for determining forecast FDI’s for all ICCs, minimum staffing requirements, minimal readiness levels and FDI triggers for all level 3 ICCs.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 8(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

8(d) Review of joint SOP – IMT Preparedness Arrangements

The date for implementation of action 8(d) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

8(e) Code red and extreme day IMT/ICC response arrangements/procedures in place

There were no code red days during the 2010-11 fire season. There was, however, one day of extreme fire danger in the Mallee and Wimmera on 31 December 2010. On this day, the FSC operated as the State Controller from the State Control Centre. Regional Controllers, Incident Controllers and IMTs were also established where required. Appropriate levels of staffing and resourcing were in place and planning and briefings occurred consistent with the relevant Joint Operating Procedure (J2.03). These preparations were observed by the BRCIM at the SCC and the Bendigo ICC/IMT on the day. There was very little fire activity on the day and demobilisation commenced in the early evening.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 8(e) has been satisfactorily implemented. However, given the “one off” nature of this exercise during the mild 2010-11 summer, the BRCIM will revisit this action in the BRCIM Final Report.

8(f) MFB joint training exercises to ensure there is an “all hazards” approach to improving major response to fires

A steering committee comprising representatives from CFA, DSE and MFB engaged consultants to conduct a series of eight level 3 IMT exercises across Victoria during November and December 2010. MFB personnel attended exercises at Ferntree Gully, Kangaroo Ground and Moorooduc.

Finding: Two comprehensive reports were produced as a result of these exercises. The findings were provided to the State Fire Control Team for consideration and referral to relevant groups for action and resolution as required. The BRCIM considers action 8(f) has been satisfactorily implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Country Fire Authority and Department of Sustainability and Environment prescribe and audit the minimum number and nature of level 3 joint training exercises in which incident management team staff (including volunteers) are required to participate.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9(a) 8 Joint IMT exercises conducted</td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

9(a) 8 Joint IMT exercises conducted

Eight level 3 IMT exercises involving DSE, CFA and MFB were conducted across Victoria (one in each region), during November and December 2010. These exercises were well attended and participants expressed support for further exercises which will be conducted prior to the 2011-12 fire season. Findings from the exercises were provided to the State Fire Control Team, which comprises the Chief Fire Officers from the CFA, MFB, DSE, the FSC and the State Emergency Response Coordinator from Victoria Police, for consideration and action as required.

Some of the findings have already been acted upon. For example, a report compiled on these level 3 exercises identified that Incident Controllers were not placing a high enough priority on the importance of issuing community warnings during exercises.

As a consequence, the FSC has written to Incident Controllers confirming the need to issue community warnings as a top priority. This matter was also addressed with Incident Controllers across the state during face to face fire season presentations by the State Fire Control Team.

Finding: While action 9(a) has been satisfactorily implemented, the BRCIM considers the action itself falls short of the intent of VBRC recommendation 9. The VBRC stated that, in view of the vital importance of joint training, the CFA and DSE should prescribe the minimum number and nature of joint exercises in which personnel must participate to maintain level 3 accreditation and that compliance should be monitored through annual audits of attendance. The BRCIM believes that the state should further consider the intent of the VBRC in regard to recommendation 9 and implement appropriate actions accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The State clarify whether, during major fires, Victoria Police should discharge its coordination functions from the State Emergency Response Coordination Centre or from the State Control Centre.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10(a) Emergency management coordination function discharged from State Control Centre (SCC)</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10(b) Central coordination support function from State Emergency Support Centre</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

10(a) Emergency management coordination function discharged from State Control Centre (SCC)

10(b) Central coordination support function from State Emergency Support Centre

The locations from where Victoria Police should discharge its responsibility during major fires have now been resolved. The Chief Commissioner of Police has reviewed Victoria Police’s emergency management coordination arrangements. The Chief Commissioner has confirmed that in the event of a major fire, Victoria Police will discharge its statewide emergency management coordination function from the SCC and its central coordination support function (which effectively will occur whenever control is established) from the State Emergency Support Centre, located at the Victoria Police Centre. These arrangements were implemented during the only major fire of the 2010-11 fire season at Tostaree.

Finding: The BRCIM considers actions 10(a) and (b) have been satisfactorily implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The State consider amending the Emergency Management Act 1986 and the Emergency Management Manual Victoria in order to achieve the following:

11.1 remove the title of Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management from the Minister or Police and Emergency Services

11.2 clarify the function and powers of the Minister

11.3 designate the Chief Commissioner of Police as Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management, who would have primary responsibility for keeping the Minister informed during an emergency.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11(a) Amendments to <em>Emergency Management Act 1986</em> (the EM Act) (replacing of terms ‘coordinator in chief’, clarification powers of Minister and designates Chief Commissioner of Police as State Emergency Response Coordinator)</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11(b) Amendments to SERP to reflect changes to the EM Act</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11(c) Amend EMMV to include updated SERP</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

11(a) Amendments to the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (the EM Act) (replacing of terms ‘coordinator in chief’, clarification powers of Minister and designates Chief Commissioner of Police as State Emergency Response Coordinator)

*Finding:* The date for implementation of action 11(a) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

11(b) Amendments to SERP to reflect changes to the EM Act

*Finding:* The date for implementation of action 11(b) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

11(c) Amend EMMV to include updated SERP

*Finding:* The date for implementation of action 11(c) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The State consider either amending the *Emergency Management Act 1986* or adopting a standing practice to require the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or the Chief Commissioner of Police to consult the Premier about the possibility of declaring a state of disaster for all of or any part of Victoria whenever the Minister or the Chief Commissioner of Police becomes aware of circumstances that make it a reasonable possibility that the criteria for making such a declaration will be satisfied.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The State consider amending the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations short of a state of disaster.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>12 and 13(a) Review State of Disaster provisions in the EM Act to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 and 13(b) Amend SERP based on amendments to the EM Act re State of Disaster</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

12 and 13(a) Review State of Disaster provisions in the EM Act to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations

12 and 13(b) Amend SERP based on amendments to the EM Act re State of Disaster

Finding: The date for implementation of actions 12 and 13(a) and (b) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 14

The Victorian fire agencies amend the AIIMS framework before the 2010-11 fire season in order to do the following:

14.1 designate the Information Unit as a separate section reporting directly to the Incident Controller and require that the Information Unit contain a dedicated Public Information Officer whenever a full incident management team is required

14.2 specify a set of functions in relation to which the Deputy Incident Controller for a level 3 incident will have oversight, which may be adjustable for a particular incident by agreement between the Incident Controller and the Deputy Incident Controller

14.3 ensure that an individual with local knowledge is incorporated in an incident management team.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14(a) Revision of DSE fire suppression manual</td>
<td>30/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(b) Joint SOP on the ‘Appointment of Incident Controller’ and ‘Incident Information and Warnings’ to be updated</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(c) IMT Preparedness SOP to include local knowledge</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(d) Review SOPs – see 14(b) and 14(c)</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(e) Information Unit changes included in information officer training</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14(f) Joint pre-season briefings to incorporate these changes</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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PROGRESS

14(a) Revision of DSE fire suppression manual

The DSE Fire Management Manual 8.1 - Fire Suppression (the Manual) has been comprehensively revised to incorporate a broad range of policy and operational documents that have been amended in response to recommendations contained in the VBRC Interim and Final Reports. Revisions included relate to command and control, the FSC Act, incident control, backburning, safety officers, information and warnings. The revised Manual also includes a number of other changes that have been implemented since the last review in October 2009.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 14(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

14(b) Joint SOP on the ‘Appointment of Incident Controller’ and ‘Incident Information and Warnings’ to be updated

DSE and CFA have developed joint SOPs for the appointment of incident controllers and incident information and warnings. These joint SOPs were revised and approved by the CFA, DSE and the FSC to ensure compliance with this action on 13 December 2010. The Appointment of Incident Controller joint SOP (J3.08) now includes the role of Deputy Incident Controller, and the Incident Information and Warnings joint SOP (J4.01), now incorporates the role of the Information Officer and the Information Section. The FSC will review, in collaboration with fire service agencies, all joint SOPs following the 2010-11 fire season as part of the Fire Services Reform Action Plan.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 14(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

14(c) IMT Preparedness SOP to include local knowledge

A joint SOP (J2.04) Local Knowledge was endorsed by the CFA, DSE and FSC on 13 December 2010.

Finding: The BRCIM considers that action 14(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

14(d) Review SOPs – see 14(b) and 14(c)

Finding: The date for implementation of action 14(d) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

14(e) Information Unit changes included in information officer training

Information Officer training courses (two days) and refresher training courses (one day) were conducted for existing and new Information Officers throughout October, November and December 2010. These courses, which were attended by in excess of 300 Information Officers from all fire services and Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), included the changes made to the Information Unit within the AIIMS framework.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 14(e) has been satisfactorily implemented.

Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS)

AIIMS is a national system used to integrate activities and resources of multiple agencies at any emergency. It provides a common framework for emergency services and is principally used by the fire and land management agencies. It combines personnel, procedures, facilities, equipment and communications operating within a common organisational structure with responsibility for the management of allocated activities and resources to accomplish incident related objectives effectively.

AIIMS was developed in Australia in the 1980s. The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council is currently leading a review of the AIIMS 3rd edition, with a view to developing the AIIMS 4th edition.

14(f) Joint pre-season briefings to incorporate these changes

Each year, prior to the fire season, DSE and CFA conduct joint agency briefings around the state. These briefings usually include a message from the Chief Fire Officers, a review of significant fires, a summary of findings from debriefs from the previous season, a meteorological overview and seasonal outlook and an overview of community preparedness activities.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

For the 2010-11 fire season, these briefings also incorporated material in relation to a number of changes emanating from the VBRC’s Final Report recommendations. These included the revised Bushfire Safety Policy, Warnings, Command and Control, Incident Management, Information Flow, Fire Investigation and Safety.

The 2010-11 joint CFA/DSE regional briefing presentations were delivered to approximately 800 DSE and CFA regional staff during October and November 2010. The briefing notes accompanying these sessions incorporated the changes specified in recommendation 14 of the VBRC Final Report. These include the establishment of a separate Information Unit reporting directly to the Incident Controller, which includes a Public Information Officer, specified functions for Deputy Incident Controllers and the requirement for an individual with local knowledge to be incorporated into the IMT. The changes are also explicitly included under the Changes to AIMS in the Victorian section of the CFA/DSE publication, Pre-Season Update October 2010, which was distributed to all CFA members and DSE area managers for distribution to relevant staff.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 14(f) has been satisfactorily implemented with the joint pre-season briefing presentations, accompanying briefing notes and the Pre-Season Update October 2010 distributed to the CFA and DSE incorporating the changes recommended by the VBRC.

### RECOMMENDATION 15

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment:

15.1 amend their procedures to require that an incident action plan summary be completed within the first four hours of an incident being reported and be provided to the State Control Centre and, where established, to the relevant Area of Operations Control Centre

15.2 adopt DSE’s incident action plan summary as the template to be used by all incident management teams and ensure that the template is included in the online IMT Tool Box

15.3 provide regular training to IMT staff, highlighting the importance of information and reinforcing the support available from specialists within the State Control Centre.

### STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15(a) Update joint incident action plan summaries SOP</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(b) Review joint SOP – incident action plan summary</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15(c) IMT toolbox highlighted and tested in pre-season updates and exercises</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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### PROGRESS

**15(a) Update joint incident action plan summaries SOP**

Incident action plans are a part of the AIMS framework and are approved by the Incident Controllers as a primary tool available to IMTs to enable them to do their job. A joint SOP (J3.03) Incident Action Planning was approved by CFA/DSE and the FSC on 13 December 2010. This joint SOP requires incident action plan summaries to be produced within four hours and distributed to the SCC stated in recommendation 15.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 15(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

15(b) Review joint SOP – incident action plan summary

Finding: The date for implementation of action 15(b) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

15(c) IMT toolbox highlighted and tested in pre-season updates and exercises

The IMT toolbox is a software application where policy, procedures, forms and templates can be accessed by team members to assist in the performance of their role in managing a fire.

Significant online improvements were made to the IMT toolbox for the 2010-11 fire season. These improvements enabled both DSE and CFA to access the one authoritative set of online information, rather than operating over dual websites or via potentially inconsistent versions on compact disc. Other advantages include a latest additions section and standard document templates. The IMT toolbox was included in the joint regional pre-season briefings, which are discussed more fully in this report at recommendation 9.

Finding: The enhanced online capability has improved the functionality of the IMT toolbox. The BRCIM considers action 15(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 16

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment improve mapping support in the following ways:

16.1 DSE providing mapping data free of charge to emergency response agencies
16.2 greatly increasing the CFA’s ‘write’ access to FireMap for incident management team staff
16.3 establishing a joint DSE-CFA training program to ensure that mapping officers in level 2 and 3 incident management teams are fully trained in using FireMap, including in producing fire prediction maps
16.4 requiring before the 2010-11 fire season that FireMap be used for joint incidents.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16(a) FireMap server upgrade</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(b) Enhanced Phoenix FireMap Simulation Tool – to be used during fire season</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(c) Mapping team joint SOP developed</td>
<td>21/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(d) Joint training sessions for level 2 and 3 IMT mapping officers to be conducted</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(e) Joint accreditation program to be developed</td>
<td>14/10/2014</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(f) Review joint mapping team SOP</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16(g) Provision of mapping data free of charge to fire agencies</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRESS

16(a) FireMap Server Upgrade

DSE completed the FireMap server upgrade in December 2010 as part of the Department’s bushfire information and communications technology (ICT) projects. The server upgrade involved establishing a second server and rebalancing the FireMap load across the two servers. This has the effect of enabling increased user access and improved reliability and capacity of systems.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 16(a) has been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM notes, however, that agency based ICT systems such as mapping, should ultimately be standardised, consistent with the aim of achieving greater efficiency and interoperability between agencies in information technology, as expressed by the VBRC in recommendation 22.

16(b) Enhanced Phoenix FireMap Simulation Tool – to be used during fire season

The Phoenix RapidFire tool has been used to model the predicted path of all bushfires during the 2010-11 fire season, including the Tostaree fire in February 2011. The Phoenix RapidFire tool has been integrated with DSE and CFA bushfire reporting systems. When a bushfire is reported, Phoenix produces predictive maps within 10 minutes. This digital predictive mapping is a significant improvement on the manual hard copy maps which the Integrated Emergency Coordination Centre (now known as the SCC) relied upon during the February 2009 bushfires in terms of timeliness, accuracy, distribution and auditing. The products generated by the tool are capable of providing warnings several hours in advance to communities within a predicted area of impact.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 16(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

16(c) Mapping team joint SOP developed

A mapping team is a joint agency specialist team within the planning function of an IMT. The mapping team is responsible for producing operational and community safety maps that inform operational decision making, community messaging and warnings. A joint standard operating procedure was drafted to ensure that FireMap was used as the web based incident management system for joint incidents in the 2010-11 fire season. A joint SOP (J3.13) Mapping Team was approved by DSE, CFA and FSC for this purpose on 13 December 2010.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 16(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

16(d) Joint training sessions for level 2 and 3 IMT mapping officers to be conducted

Joint mapping training for multi-agency Level 2 and 3 IMT members, which included a number of guest presenters, was held over three days in the first week of October 2010. A second, more condensed training session was offered on 29 October for personnel who were unable to attend the initial sessions. The sessions covered the broad range of both DSE and CFA mapping applications.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 16(d) has been satisfactorily implemented.

16(e) Joint accreditation program to be developed

Finding: The date for implementation of action 16(e) is October 2014. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

16(f) Review joint mapping team SOP

Finding: The date for implementation of action 16(f) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

16(g) Provision of mapping data free of charge to fire agencies

In its Final Report, the VBRC stated that it could not see any justification for charging the CFA and other emergency response agencies for publicly owned, mapping data. The VBRC recommended that DSE provide mapping data free of charge to emergency response agencies. In response, the October 2010 Plan committed to providing mapping data free of charge to fire agencies. DSE will, however, extend the current provision of Vicmap vector data, aerial photography and satellite imagery free of charge to all of the state’s emergency services organisations from 1 July 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM acknowledges the contribution of DSE in providing mapping data free of charge to not only fire and emergency response agencies, but to all of the state’s emergency services organisations. This ensures that all emergency services organisations will receive their mapping data free of charge and will also receive the entire suite of the current version of data. This significantly enhances effective emergency management interoperability across the state. The BRCIM considers action 16(g) has been satisfactorily implemented and indeed, that DSE’s response has exceeded the recommendation of the VBRC.

RECOMMENDATION 17

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment establish before the 2010-11 fire season:

17.1 a uniform, objective and transparent process based on the current DSE approach for the accreditation of level 3 Incident Controllers
17.2 a performance review system for level 3 Incident Controllers
17.3 a traineeship program for progression from level 2 to level 3 incident management team positions.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17(a) Complete endorsement of Level 3 IMT members – identify 98 Level 3 Controllers</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17(b) CFA/DSE joint agreement – uniform process for accreditation of level 3 incident controllers</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17(c) Interim joint performance review system developed and tested</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17(d) DSE Level 2 to 3 program ongoing accreditation</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17(e) CFA Level 3 Controllers – development and assessment process</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17(f) Process of development, selection and endorsement of Level 3 Incident Controllers will be evaluated</td>
<td>01/12/2011⁶</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁶ Previous due date 30/04/11.
**CHAPTER 7.1**

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**PROGRESS**

**17(a) Complete endorsement of Level 3 IMT members – identify 98 Level 3 controllers**

CFA, DSE and Parks Victoria provided the FSC with a consolidated list of 121 Level 3 Incident Controllers for the 2010-11 fire season. Of these, 121 level 3 controllers, 98 are from the CFA, 13 from DSE and 10 from Parks Victoria. Further to this, on 17 January 2011, the FSC issued a SOP – *Personnel approved for appointment to Regional Controller and Level 3 Incident Controller positions*. This SOP requires each fire agency to provide the FSC with an updated list of approved Regional Controllers and Level 3 Incident Controllers prior to 1 November each year.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 17(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**17(b) CFA/DSE joint agreement – uniform process for accreditation of level 3 incident controllers**

In its Final Report, the VBRC noted that a standardised and rigorous approach to the accreditation of level 3 Incident Controllers on the part of both the CFA and DSE would deliver considerable benefits in ensuring the appointment of the highest calibre Incident Controllers. The VBRC recommended that the DSE accreditation process form the basis of such an approach. The Chief Officers of CFA and DSE wrote to the FSC on 1 December 2010 confirming their in-principle agreement to implement a uniform process for accreditation of Level 3 Incident Controllers based upon the DSE approach. This included a step by step outline of the development and assessment process.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 17(b) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**17(c) Interim joint performance review system developed and tested**

A draft procedure and report format for DSE/CFA performance monitoring for Level 3 Incident Controllers was prepared following a workshop with subject matter experts in December 2010. Given the benign 2010-11 fire season, there were no opportunities to trial the system. It is, therefore, proposed to trial the system next fire season. The DSE and CFA Chief Officers wrote to the FSC on 19 April 2011 providing a copy of the in principle agreement to implement joint performance monitoring for Level 3 Incident Controllers.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 17(c) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**17(d) DSE Level 2 to 3 program ongoing accreditation**

DSE, CFA and MFB have formed a Multi-Agency Capability Committee for Bushfire. The purpose of this committee is to provide advice on all incident management learning and development matters. The intention is to develop courses that will become prerequisites for individuals wishing to transition from Level 2 to Level 3 IMT roles. A curriculum is under development which will ensure one uniform, objective, transparent approach for all Level 3 Incident Controller appointments. The process is supported by a set of principles contained in the DSE/CFA Accreditation Agreement and includes the appointment of a mentor for Level 2 Incident Controllers aspiring to become Level 3 Controllers.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 17(d) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

17(e) CFA Level 3 Controllers – development and assessment process

The state committed to ensuring that all currently endorsed CFA Level 3 Incident Controllers would undertake a trial development and assessment process during the 2010-11 financial year. The CFA commenced this regionalised process in February 2011 for the transition of its existing Level 3 Controllers to ensure compliance with the CFA/DSE agreed Development, Assessment and Selection Process. The BRCIM was provided with evidence of this process in the form of a Memorandum to Controllers from the Deputy Chief Officer, Operational Policy and Planning, dated 31 March 2011. At 3 June 2011, 92 of CFA’s 98 Level 3 Incident Controllers were participating in this process.

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 17(e) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

17(f) Process of development, selection and endorsement of Level 3 Incident Controllers will be evaluated

This action had an original due date of 30 April 2011. It is, however, inextricably linked to action 17(e) which has a due date of 30 June 2011. In discussion with the CFA, it has been agreed to reschedule the due date for 17(f) to 1 December 2011, prior to the 2011-12 fire season.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 17(f) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures to require that a suitably experienced, qualified and competent person be appointed as Incident Controller, regardless of the control agency for the fire.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>18(a) Appointment of one Incident Controller – joint SOP</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18(b) Review joint SOPs</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

18(a) Appointment of one Incident Controller – Joint SOP

Control is the term used to describe the overall direction of response activities in an emergency. Control relates to situations, operates horizontally across organisations and includes responsibility for tasking other organisations. Responsibility for control is established in the relevant agency legislation. The (Agency) Incident Controller is responsible for managing and resolving the emergency. The joint SOP (J3.01) Determining the Control Agency was approved by the DSE, CFA and FSC on 13 December 2010. This joint SOP (was also approved at the sametime as (J3.08) Appointment of Incident Controller.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 18(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

18(b) Review Joint SOPs

Finding: The date for implementation of action 18(b) is December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
CHAPTER 7.1

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RECOMMENDATION 19

The Country Fire Authority provide to all CFA volunteers an identification card or similar to facilitate their passage through roadblocks established in accordance with the 2009 Guidelines for the Operation of Traffic Management Points during Wildfires.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19(a) Volunteer identification system developed by CFA</td>
<td>31/10/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19(b) Volunteer vehicle identification stickers produced and distributed for Traffic Management Points</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19(c) DSE contractors and volunteer included in CFA identification and vehicle stickers project</td>
<td>30/10/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PROGRESS

19(a) Volunteer identification system developed by CFA

Finding: The date for implementation of action 19(a) is 31 October 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

19(b) Volunteer vehicle identification stickers produced and distributed for Traffic Management Points

19(c) DSE contractors and volunteers included in CFA identification and vehicle stickers project

The CFA produced and distributed temporary vehicle identification stickers for use at Traffic Management Points for the 2010-11 fire season. Three types were produced; one sticker for CFA volunteer private vehicles, one sticker for private firefighting appliance/machinery and another sticker for DSE contractors. The CFA stickers were distributed to all CFA district headquarters where further distribution to individuals was recorded. The CFA also produced interim guidelines for the use of the stickers. The DSE distributed vehicle identification stickers to all current fire related contractors prior to the 2010-11 fire season.

Victoria Police informed their officers about these stickers at the pre-season briefing in October 2010. In addition, officers were informed via an information sheet distributed to Regional Response Coordinators in November 2010, an educational package distributed to Regional Response Coordinators in December 2010 and a link created in December 2010 on the Bushfire Information Hub on Victoria Police’s internal website, which is accessible online to all officers.

Finding: The BRCIM considers actions 19(b) and (c) have been satisfactorily implemented.
RECOMMENDATION 20

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their policies on aerial preparedness and standby arrangements, their dispatch protocols and the management of aircraft in order to do the following:

20.1 require that at locations that attract the risk assessment or preparedness level A on code red days all personnel needed for air operations must be on standby by 10.00 am

20.2 establish a system that enables the dispatch of aircraft to fires in high risk areas without requiring a request from an Incident Controller or the State Duty Officer.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of operating procedure and standing orders by State Aircraft Units (Stage 1)</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Readiness and Preparedness plans (Stage 2)</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project scoping exercise to improve information flow during aircraft request and dispatch</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a system that will enhance dispatch arrangements</td>
<td>30/06/2014</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial of two medium sized bomber planes</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerial fire fighting arsenal to be 48 with a further 170 on standby if required</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence trialling options for a high tech intelligence platform, “eye in the sky”</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two new forward looking infrared cameras capable of attachment to any available helicopters</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue the trial development of night vision goggles</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review joint SOP – see 20(a)</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

20(a) Review of operating procedure and standing orders by State Aircraft Units (Stage 1)

During the fire season in Victoria, aircraft preparedness and dispatch decisions are based on consideration of fire danger levels, community risks and the requirements of any pre-formed IMTs. During 2010, the DSE and CFA reviewed their procedures to improve the availability of aircraft for rapid deployment on days of predicted high fire danger.

In July 2010, the State Aircraft Unit prepared a discussion paper in relation to improving Aircraft Request and Dispatch for consideration by the Aviation Management Committee. Following consultation with DSE and CFA, revised arrangements now align with the line of control for incident management. They were incorporated into the aircraft section of the DSE Networked Emergency Organisations (NEO) Regional Fire Readiness and Response Plans for the 2010-11 fire season and the CFA Aircraft Operations Standing Order (SO 13.00).

Finding: The BRCIM considers that while action 20(a) has been satisfactorily implemented, this area would benefit from the development of a joint SOP with the FSC.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

20(b) Review of Readiness and Preparedness plans (Stage 2)

Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(b) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(c) Project scoping exercise to improve information flow during aircraft request and dispatch

Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(c) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(d) Develop a system that will enhance dispatch arrangements

Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(d) is 30 June 2014. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(e) Trial of two medium sized bomber planes

Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(e) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(f) Aerial fire fighting arsenal to be 48 with a further 170 on standby if required

The VBRC Final Report acknowledged that aircraft are an integral part of initial fire attack and that they played an important role in response to the bushfires in late January and February 2009. In response, the government committed to increasing the number of aircraft available for the 2010-11 fire season. DSE, via the State Aircraft Unit, contracted 47 aircraft for the 2010-11 fire season. The fleet, which included a combination of fixed wing and rotary aircraft, was based throughout Victoria. On days of forecast extreme and above fire danger, aircraft were strategically located at airfields in the regions of highest fire danger.

While the state committed to having 48 aircraft, there was a contractual issue with the supplier of the forty-eighth aircraft. These contractual issues were not resolved until mid way through the fire season and a decision was made not to finalise the contract given the remaining fire season predictions, hence only 47 were contracted.

The additional 170 aircraft on standby are part of a “Call When Needed Register”. These are aircraft that can be called upon if preparedness levels require aircraft in addition to the 47 contracted. These aircraft are required (in addition to meeting all specifications for services in the contract) to be ready for take off, with sufficient crew to conduct the required activity at the nominated operational base of the aircraft or at another location nominated by the state’s representative.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 20(f) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

20(g) Commence trialling options for a high tech intelligence platform, “eye in the sky”
Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(g) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(h) Two new forward looking infrared cameras capable of attachment to any available helicopters
Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(h) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(i) Continue the trial development of night vision goggles
Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(i) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

20(j) Review Joint SOP – see 20(a)
Finding: The date for implementation of action 20(j) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 21
The State, in conjunction with Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Defence, develop an agreement that allows Commonwealth aerial resources that are suitable for fire fighting and support activities to be incorporated in preparedness plans and used on days of high fire risk.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>21(a) Commonwealth to conduct operational briefing</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21(b) Commonwealth to review Commonwealth Disaster Response Plan</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21(c) DPC to discuss improved access to Commonwealth resources with the Commonwealth</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
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PROGRESS

21(a) Commonwealth to conduct operational briefing

21(b) Commonwealth to review Commonwealth Disaster Response Plan

21(c) DPC to discuss improved access to Commonwealth resources with the Commonwealth

The DPC has advised that at the NEMC meeting of 16 September 2010, it was agreed to engage with the Department of Defence to discuss disaster preparedness and arrangements for giving effect to recommendation 21.

The Commonwealth conducted an operational briefing before the 2010-11 fire season, as it did in 2009, to inform Victorian officials of the Commonwealth support, including air resources, available for the fire season.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

DPC also advises that fire agencies, through the FSC, have strengthened links with the Commonwealth through:

- the appointment of a liaison officer from Emergency Management Australia to act as a conduit between the two jurisdictions and including this officer in planning considerations on days forecast to have a dangerous fire risk
- establishing strong links with the Chief of the Defence Force and seeking further clarity around accessing Defence assets through the long standing Defence Assistance to the Civilian Community (DACC) arrangements
- including Defence personnel in State Emergency Management Team preparedness and response deliberations.

The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update on recommendation 21.

Agreements for Commonwealth support during an incident are currently provided in the Commonwealth Disaster Plan (COMDISPLAN) and DACC arrangements. In response to the VBRC’s first interim report and through the Commonwealth’s own review processes, it is considered that these two mechanisms provide the best means of Commonwealth coordination of emergency assistance to states and territories.

Processes for the activation of COMDISPLAN were revised in December 2010 to provide for activation of the plan in anticipation of requests for assistance from jurisdictions to allow for timely response to such requests. Defence also continues to pursue methods by which the DACC arrangements can be most readily applied during times of emergency, including during bushfires.

In response to feedback provided by senior members of bushfire fighting authorities during the pre-season briefings that Defence participates in as an outcome of the VBRC Interim Report, Defence has consulted operational representatives of bushfire fighting authorities to seek specific ways in which aerial surveillance support might be improved. The outcomes of a workshop are being progressed. Defence has also provided advice to bushfire authorities on ways to improve their plans so that critical decision points for initiating requests for Commonwealth assistance are more clearly identified. Defence continues to invest in its own Joint Operations Support Staff liaison officer network established in the regional offices of the Directorate of Training Area Management.

Work continues on the implementation of the National Crisis Coordination Project (NCCP) and Australian Government Crisis Management Framework to ensure communications and procedures enable desired levels of responsiveness.

The Interim Crisis Coordination Centre (CCC) was established in September 2010 in existing departmental accommodation and is fully functional and operational. An enhanced CCC, which is being constructed and is scheduled to be operational in September 2011, will provide more space for whole-of-government collaboration, better connectivity back to visiting official’s home agencies and appropriate systems to coordinate information of all classifications.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

It provides:

- Ministers and agencies with situational reports and other information and coordinates a whole-of-government approach to crisis management in support of response and recovery
- a single channel for coordination of response and recovery activities with states and territories to minimise interference and duplication of effort
- a single avenue through which jurisdictions request and for the coordination across all agencies of Australian government physical and financial assistance.

The CCC operates, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to:

- Monitor - 24/7 all-hazards monitoring and reporting of domestic and international crises (noting that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the lead for international incidents)
- Inform - whole-of-government situational awareness and briefing products including incident notifications and briefs
- Coordinate -
  » coordinates and implements ministerial decisions
  » provision of Australian government physical assistance under the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN), including the deployment of Australian Government Liaison Officers to the affected jurisdiction.

Engagement with the Commonwealth Government and jurisdictions will enhance communications and information sharing.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 21(a) has been satisfactorily implemented with the Commonwealth conducting operational briefings prior to the 2010-11 fire season.

In relation to action 21(b), the BRCIM notes that a review of the COMDISPLAN is progressing. The BRCIM will revisit action 21(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

The BRCIM considers action 21(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION 22**

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment standardise their operating systems and information and communications technologies with the aim of achieving greater efficiency and interoperability between agencies.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>22(a) Multi-agency project group to develop agreed standards for the operation of GPS in emergency vehicles</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(b) GPS in DSE and CFA vehicles</td>
<td>31/07/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(c) IMTs able to access upgraded fire information systems technology</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
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### Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

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<tr>
<td>22(d) Victoria Police members provided with network compatible radio handsets</td>
<td>30/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(e) Trial of dual band portable radios</td>
<td>30/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(f) Evaluation of trial – see 22(e)</td>
<td>30/04/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(g) Review of existing training – radio operations</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(h) Evaluation of requirement for CFA radios and mobile phones</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(i) Standardise interconnections of radio networks between CFA and DSE</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>22(j) New remote radio sites under development – Lake Mountain, Currajong and Mt Ingoldsby</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(k) Fire agencies to develop and enhance fire information systems and upgrade existing tools such as Fireweb</td>
<td>14/10/2014</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROGRESS

**22(a) Multi-agency project group to develop agreed standards for the operation of GPS in emergency vehicles**

In late December 2010, DOJ released a draft Code of Practice, which was designed to consolidate agreed practice methods for the formation of asset location data, radio transmission and interoperability across agencies. A final Code of Practice, *Resource Location Data Exchange* was issued on 3 June 2011. This document incorporates agreed standards to ensure that GPS resource location data are harmonised between agencies. DSE and CFA vehicles are to be equipped with GPS units consistent with these standards as part of their respective radio replacement projects over the next few years.

The BRCIM notes the completion of the Code of Practice by DOJ for the emergency services sector. Strict compliance by agencies with this Code will be essential in achieving true interoperability between agencies. The BRCIM also notes that the Emergency Services Heads of Agency Committee that has oversight of the state’s Emergency Services Communication Strategic Framework (ESCSF) has established a Chief Information Officer sub-committee to monitor progress to ensure greater efficiency and interoperability between agencies in information and communication technology.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 22(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

22(b) GPS in DSE and CFA vehicles
Finding: The date for implementation of action 22(b) is 31 July 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

22(c) IMTs able to access upgraded fire information systems technology
Finding: The date for implementation of action 22(c) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

22(d) Victoria Police members provided with network compatible radio handsets
22(e) Trial of dual band portable radios
22(f) Evaluation of trial
Victoria Police acknowledges the need for improvements and replacement of the StateNet Mobile Radio (SMR) fleet and in particular the need to ensure interoperability between agencies. A trial was conducted of dual band portable radios to inform future procurement decisions. This trial of 10 dual band StateNet Mobile Radio/Metropolitan Mobile Radio (SMR/MMR) was undertaken across areas including Bacchus Marsh, Gisborne, Wallan, Kinglake and Drouin over two phases, from 1 April 2010 to 31 May 2010 and again from 1 October 2010 to 31 March 2011. The trial has been evaluated and a final report has been completed. It is likely that the trial will lead to the purchase of additional similar equipment in the trial areas and other areas operating on the SMR/MMR fringe. Consideration will also be given to providing similar equipment for police units operating on a routine basis in both metropolitan and country areas.
Finding: The BRCIM considers actions 22(d), (e) and (f) have been satisfactorily implemented.

22(g) Review of existing training – radio operations
A comprehensive review of radio operation training, by both the State Emergency and Security and Education Departments of Victoria Police has been conducted. As a result, a range of changes have been initiated to training in radio operations. Training on SMR Radios is now included in the initial radio training for police recruits. Timing of initial radio training has been moved to later in the course, closer to the initial field placement. Recruits using SMR or a combination of MMR/SMR radios are now required to demonstrate their competency and proficiency during placement.

Staff located in areas using SMR, or a combination of SMR/MMR networks, are continually exposed to the networks suitable to their area and specific additional training is usually not required. To assist initial transition into these areas, however, a number of training packages have been placed on the Victoria Police Intranet. The Assistant Commissioner (Education) is also currently considering the production of a video training package on SMR radios.
Finding: The BRCIM considers action 22(g) has been satisfactorily implemented.
22(h) Evaluation of requirement for CFA radios and mobile phones

As noted in relation to action 22(d) above, Victoria Police acknowledges the need to achieve interoperability in communication between agencies. As a temporary arrangement, Victoria Police considered the practicality of making CFA radios and mobile phones available in police vehicles. The installation of these radios in over 100 police vehicles in areas identified as high risk of bushfires was considered impractical for a number of reasons. This includes the limited number of radios available, difficulties with licensing arrangements and costs.

It is also highly likely that the CFA radio network will ultimately be replaced under the state’s ESCSF, which is designed to deliver the best possible communications technology and interoperability between agencies.

Mobile phones were also considered and rejected as they may place police members at unacceptable risk if the carrier network service fails or becomes overloaded. Mobile phones can also not be monitored or recorded and do not operate within the command and control arrangement required to ensure effective incident management.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 22(h) has been satisfactorily implemented. However, the BRCIM encourages the state to pursue the implementation of a truly interoperable communication systems as a matter of priority and will revisit this matter as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

22(i) Standardise interconnections of radio networks between CFA and DSE

Finding: The date for implementation of action 22(i) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

22(j) New remote radio sites under development – Lake Mountain, Currajong and Mt Ingoldsby

Finding: The date for implementation of action 22(j) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

22(k) Fire agencies to develop and enhance fire information systems and upgrade existing tools such as Fireweb

Finding: The date for implementation of action 22(k) is 14 October 2014. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 23

The Country Fire Authority review and improve its communications strategy as a matter of priority and develop a program for identifying and responding to black spots in radio coverage.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23(a) Design and implement a cohesive process for resolving radio black spots (part of CFA Communications Strategy)</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23(b) Treatment program delivered to remediate black spots</td>
<td>31/12/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23(c) Radio discipline procedures in pre-bushfire season briefings and training</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PROGRESS

23(a) Design and implement a cohesive process for resolving radio black spots (part of CFA Communications Strategy)

The CFA Communications Strategy, which is to incorporate a cohesive process for resolving radio black spots, was still in early draft form at 31 December 2010. This matter was raised directly with the CFA by the BRCIM in February 2011. The final CFA Communications Strategy had not been provided to the BRCIM by 3 June 2011 in time for this Progress Report as requested.

The CFA advised the BRCIM, however, that a Radio Communications Strategy including the Black Spot Remediation Project had been initiated in collaboration with DSE to progress this action. This project aims to develop and implement a continuous radio communication black spots identification process and then to implement appropriate solutions to address radio communication black spots.

This process involves establishing a baseline of the current incident management radio coverage for CFA and DSE, collection and analysis of field reports related to known black spots, development and implementation of a program of work to resolve identified black spots and the trial and evaluation of alternative solutions for black spot remediation. The CFA also provided evidence of an approach to ensure future regular and systematic review of radio coverage once existing black spots are remediated.

The CFA advised the BRCIM in January 2011, that eight radio sites had been identified for remediation. In June 2011, the CFA advised that black spot solutions had been delivered for three of these sites.

Finding: The BRCIM notes this positive development, which does address the absence of any systematic approach by CFA to identify and implement technical solutions for radio black spots as observed in the VBRC’s Final Report. Progress appears slow, however, in this area which is critical in protecting human life during fires. The BRCIM expects substantial progress in this matter by December 2011, noting the state’s commitment in the Implementation Plan to ensure that all known existing blackspots are remediated by December 2012. The BRCIM will revisit action 23(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

23(b) Treatment program delivered to remediate black spots

Finding: The date for implementation of action 23(b) is 31 December 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

23(c) Radio discipline procedures in pre-bushfire season briefings and training

As discussed in action 14(f) earlier in this report, each year prior to the fire season, DSE and CFA conduct joint agency briefings around the state. In 2010, these briefings were delivered to approximately 800 DSE and CFA regional staff during October and November. These briefings incorporated material in relation to a broad range of changes emanating from the VBRC Final Report recommendations. Radio discipline procedures were incorporated into these briefings, the associated handouts and the pre-season update magazine distributed to all members.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 23(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION 24**

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment amend their procedures for investigating safety incidents and ‘near-misses’ to ensure that all dangerous incidents, including back-burns, are fully investigated and that all relevant people are consulted and informed of the results.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24(a) Updating of procedures and processes for the 2010-11 fire season to ensure improved investigation and analysis of safety incidents</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24(b) CFA member assistance program to be examined in relation to their involvement in significant and dangerous events</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24(c) DSE – Implement a new OHS Incident IT system</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>24(d) DSE – Enhanced employee assistance program</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24(e) DSE – Introduction of regular onsite counsellor visits</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>24(f) DSE – Increasing the number of staff trained in peer support</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**Human Factors Professional Development Course**

In its Final Report, the VBRC noted the numerous occasions where firefighters were in extreme danger during the fires of February 2009. The VBRC commended the CFA and DSE on the wide range of safety initiatives, which have been introduced and maintained since the tragic deaths of five firefighters at Linton in 1998 and the subsequent Coroner’s Report into that tragedy, “The Investigation and Inquests into a Wildfire and the Deaths of Five Firefighters at Linton on 2 December 1998”. One of these initiatives is the Human Factors Professional Development course.

The CFA has trialled a number of professional incident and operational investigation development courses for fire and emergency (Ambulance Victoria, VICSES) services sector staff and volunteers. These one and two day courses, based upon Human Factors research, cover a range of operational activities including: enhancing information flow, IMT effectiveness, implications for operational decision making and after action reviews.

Human Factors Professional Development is based upon emerging research from the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (Bushfire CRC). “Protection of People and Property” was one of four initial Bushfire CRC research programs. This program included research into recruitment and retention of volunteers, protection of buildings and their occupants during bushfires and a suite of projects around firefighter health and safety. A refining of these projects to better meet agency needs led to the development of “The Protecting Firefighters Information Package”. Ongoing consultation with agencies has further refined this concept. Agencies continue to demonstrate a strong ongoing commitment to understanding both the team and individual factors, which influence and affect decision making in the interests of protecting lives.

The CFA and other agencies are working with the Bushfire CRC to continually improve this understanding and approach. The next step is a proposed series of workshops designed to assist agencies to build capacity in understanding those human factors known to influence decision making and performance during emergency events. The CFA in particular is working cooperatively with the Bushfire CRC to ultimately develop this product into a structured suite of skills and knowledge that can be delivered on an ongoing basis by the Bushfire CRC throughout Australia and the region.

The active engagement by agencies in understanding the important findings from Human Factors research is an exemplar of how emergency services can integrate new research findings into their practice.

*The BRCIM commends the collaboration of researchers and agency personnel in this critical area of firefighter safety and encourages the state to explore opportunities for this approach in the broader community fire safety context of shared responsibility.*

Further information can be found on the Bushfire CRC website at www.bushfirecrc.com.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

24(a) Updating of procedures and processes for the 2010-11 fire season to ensure improved investigation and analysis of safety incidents

The CFA, DSE and FSC signed a joint SOP (J3.08) OHS Incident Management on 13 December 2010. In addition to updating this joint SOP, the CFA has conducted a number of professional incident and operational investigation development courses for staff and volunteers. These include Human Factors professional development courses based on Bushfire CRC research in this field. Staff from the DSE, MFB and VICSES have also attended these courses. The CFA has also introduced a formal incident investigation process called the Incident Cause Investigation Analysis Method. Staff from the MFB have attended some of these training sessions.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 24(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

24(b) CFA member assistance program to be examined in relation to their involvement in significant and dangerous events

The CFA is currently redeveloping its existing Welfare Support and Recovery Plan (2009-2011) with an emphasis on evaluating, developing and enhancing support packages for members involved in significant and dangerous incidents. Draft sections of the revised policy (CFA Member Welfare and Wellbeing Strategy 2011-2015) are currently in the consultation phase of development.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the commencement of the revision of the CFA Welfare Support and Recovery Plan. The BRCIM will revisit action 24(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

24(c) DSE – Implement a new OHS Incident IT system

The DSE implemented a new OHS incident IT system known as the Personal Organisational Safety System for U and Me (POSSUM) on 1 October 2010. The system, which was developed in close consultation with staff, offers significantly improved functionality compared to the previous system. Improvements include the ability to log incidents for others including contractors, automatic electronic assignment to supervisors, the addition of a corrective action process, automatic escalation process and the ability to delegate and transfer to other levels of management. The system will be upgraded and further modules will be added throughout 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 24(c) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

24(d) DSE – Enhanced employee assistance program

24(e) Introduction of regular onsite counsellor visits

Since 2009, the DSE’s employee assistance program has been enhanced via the inclusion of resilience and stress management sessions and the introduction of onsite counsellor visits. On 1 November 2010, following a competitive selection process, DSE appointed a private company to deliver the enhanced employee assistance program. A range of information including brochures, online articles and letters to staff have been produced to advise staff of the services, including the availability of onsite counselling.

Finding: The BRCIM considers actions 24(d) and (e) have been satisfactorily implemented.

24(f) DSE – Increasing the number of staff trained in peer support

The DSE established a volunteer Peer Support Program in 2007. Thirty-nine additional staff were recruited to the program in October 2009. At 31 December 2010, 71 volunteers were involved in the program. Refresher training is conducted annually and 52 peers attended this training in October 2010. Another recruitment drive is scheduled for 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 24(f) has been satisfactorily implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 25

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment require without exception that all relevant staff be trained in the need for Incident Controller approval to be obtained before a backburn is lit.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25(a) Revisions to DSE fire suppression manual</td>
<td>30/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25(b) Pre-season update and briefings include SOP re lighting backburns</td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25(c) DSE CFO to issue direction on backburn SOP</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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PROGRESS

25(a) Revisions to DSE fire suppression manual

25(b) Pre-season update and briefings include SOP re lighting backburns

25(c) DSE CFO to issue direction on backburn SOP

The DSE Fire Management Manual 8.1 (Fire Suppression) has been comprehensively revised in response to this recommendation. Chapter 4.14 (Suppression Methods) now includes detailed instructions regarding back burning and burning-out, including specifically the requirement that all backburns must be approved by the Incident Controller.

The CFA/DSE publication, Pre-Season Update October 2010, which is distributed to all CFA members and DSE area managers (for distribution to relevant staff), contains the advice that the Incident Controller must approve all backburns. This advice was also provided to joint CFA/DSE regional briefings of key staff in both the presentation and the briefing notes. These briefings
were conducted throughout Victoria during October and November 2010 with approximately 800 DSE and CFA regional staff attending 16 sessions.

On 7 December 2010, the DSE Chief Officer issued a written instruction reinforcing the need for all DSE and NEO staff to comply with the requirement for all backburns to be approved by the Incident Controller as documented in the Fire Suppression Manual.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 25(a), (b) and (c) have been satisfactorily implemented. To ensure consistency, however, the FSC may wish to consider issuing a Joint SOP in regard to the requirement that all backburns must be approved by the Incident Controller.

**RECOMMENDATION 26**

The Country Fire Authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment adopt the title ‘safety officer’ (as opposed to ‘safety adviser’) and require without exception that a safety officer be appointed to every level 3 incident management team.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26(a) Appointment of safety officers to every level 3 IMT</td>
<td>30/09/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26(b) Change title of ‘safety advisor’ to ‘safety officer’</td>
<td>30/09/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26(c) Briefing of relevant personnel on safety officer role</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26(d) Joint safety officer training course</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26(e) Crew protection program (fitout of 850 trucks)</td>
<td>30/06/2013</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26(f) Issuing of additional protection suits</td>
<td>14/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

26(a) Appointment of safety officers to every level 3 IMT

26(b) Change title of ‘safety advisor’ to ‘safety officer’

26(c) Briefing of relevant personnel on safety officer role

26(d) Joint safety officer training course

Safety advisers provide guidance and advice to IMTs on safety matters. The VBRC recommended the title change to safety officer as originally recommended by the Linton Report (the Report of the Investigation and Inquests into a Wildfire and the Deaths of Five Firefighters at Linton on 2 December 1998 by the State Coroner of Victoria). A joint SOP (J3.04) Safety Officer was approved by the DSE, CFA and FSC on 13 December 2010. This joint SOP in conjunction with joint SOP (J2.03) Incident Management Teams – Readiness Arrangements, that was also approved jointly on 13 December 2010, implements actions 26(a) and (b).

The joint CFA/DSE regional briefing presentations, which were delivered to approximately 800 DSE and CFA regional staff during October and November 2010 and the accompanying briefing notes, incorporate the required changes. The changes are also outlined in the CFA/DSE publication, *Pre-Season Update October 2010* which was distributed to all CFA members and
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

DSE area managers for distribution to relevant staff. In addition, a joint DSE/CFA safety officer training course was conducted on 19 and 20 October 2010, incorporating the changes from safety adviser to safety officer as required by recommendation 26.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 26(a), (b), (c) and (d) have been satisfactorily implemented.

26(e) Crew protection program (fitout of 850 trucks)

The CFA advise that these fitouts are on target for completion as scheduled by 30 June 2013.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes progress to date in relation to action 26(e). The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

26(f) Issuing of additional protection suits

As at 30 April 2011, the CFA had delivered around 13,000 protection suits to members. A further 2,000 are expected to be delivered by 30 June 2011 which is when the replacement program concludes.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 26(f) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

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**RECOMMENDATION 27**

The State amend the Regulations under Victoria’s *Electricity Safety Act 1998* and otherwise take such steps as may be required to give effect to the following:

27.1 the progressive replacement of all SWER (single-wire earth return) power lines in Victoria with aerial bundled cable, underground cabling or other technology that delivers greatly reduced bushfire risk. The replacement program should be completed in the areas of highest bushfire risk within 10 years and should continue in areas of lower bushfire risk as the lines reach the end of their engineering lives

27.2 the progressive replacement of all 22-kilovolt distribution feeders with aerial bundled cable, underground cabling or other technology that delivers greatly reduced bushfire risk as the feeders reach the end of their engineering lives. Priority should be given to distribution feeders in the areas of highest bushfire risk.

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**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27(a) Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce (BPST) established</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27(b) BPST to provide interim report</td>
<td>N/A7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27(c) BPST to provide final report</td>
<td>30/09/2011*</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27(d) Targeted work program for distribution businesses to reduce bushfire risk</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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7 Previous due date 31/01/2011.
8 Previous due date 30/06/2011.
PROGRESS

27(a) Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce (BPST) established

On 11 October 2010, Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) created the Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce (BPST). The BPST meets on a regular basis. The BPST has an independent chairperson and includes representatives from distribution businesses, the CFA and four technical experts.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 27(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

27(b) BPST to provide interim report
27(c) BPST to provide final report

The Minister for Energy and Resources wrote to ESV on 20 January 2011 to clarify and extend the original Terms of Reference of the BPST to give full effect to the recommendations of the VBRC. The Minister also advised that the proposed Interim Report was not required and the due date for the Final Report would be extended from 30 June 2011 to 30 September 2011. The Minister wrote again to ESV on 23 February 2011 requesting monthly briefings on the work of the BPST. The Director of ESV and the Chair of the BPST are now briefing the Minister on a monthly basis.

Finding: As an Interim Report is no longer required, action 27(b) is not applicable and will be reported against in action 27(c). The BRCIM will revisit action 27(c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

27(d) Targeted work program for distribution businesses to reduce bushfire risk

Finding: The date for implementation of action 27(d) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 28

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to change their asset inspection standards and procedures to require that all SWER lines and all 22-kilovolt feeders in areas of high bushfire risk are inspected at least every three years.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 29**

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to review and modify their current practices, standards and procedures for the training and auditing of asset inspectors to ensure that registered training organisations provide adequate theoretical and practical training for asset inspectors.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 and 29(a) Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2003 amended</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 and 29(b) Regulatory Impact Statement to support amendment regulations</td>
<td>31/10/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 and 29(c) ESV to assess and audit distributors bushfire mitigation plans</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

28 and 29(a) Amendment of Electricity (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2003

Electricity suppliers in Victoria are required under section 83A of the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* to prepare and submit for approval each year a mitigation plan to ESV. Information mandated for inclusion in these bushfire mitigation plans is set out in the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2003. The plans must outline the strategies, policies and processes by which electricity suppliers will minimise the risk of powerlines starting fires and list the works that are to be completed in readiness for the following summer fire danger period.

Following the release of the VBRC’s Final Report, interim amendments were made to the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2003 to insert new requirements relating to asset inspection standards and procedures. The interim regulations (the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Interim Regulations 2010) require that at risk supply networks are inspected at regular intervals of no longer than 37 months and processes and procedures must be in place to ensure only appropriately trained persons may undertake inspections.

The new inspection provisions apply not only to single wire earth return (SWER) lines but also to 22-kilovolt lines in areas of high bushfire risk and all “at risk” electric lines and supply networks (lines and those part of the supply networks that are above the surface of land in hazardous bushfire high risk areas).

The interim regulations commenced operation on 21 October 2010 and will expire on 20 October 2011. DPI and ESV are currently developing further amendments prior to the expiration of the interim regulations to ensure these new provisions are adequately addressed in the principal 2003 regulations. A regulatory impact statement will be required for the development of these amendments.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 28 and 29(a) have been satisfactorily implemented but notes that the interim regulations are to expire in October 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

28 and 29(b) Regulatory Impact Statement to support amendment regulations
28 and 29(c) ESV to assess and audit distributors’ bushfire mitigation plans

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit actions 28 and 29(b) and (c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 31
Municipal councils include in their municipal fire prevention plans for areas of high bushfire risk provision for the identification of hazard trees and for notifying the responsible entities with a view to having the situation redressed.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<td>31(a) MFPPs to include identification of hazard trees</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

31(a) MFPPs to include identification of hazard trees

The Electricity Safety Act 1998 was amended in October 2010 to require councils to make provision for hazard tree identification and notification in their fire prevention plans. The MAV has drafted provisions for individual councils to insert into these plans.

Finding: The date for implementation of action 31(a) is 1 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 32
The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:

32.1 disable the reclose function on the automatic circuit reclosers on all SWER lines for the six weeks of greatest risk in every fire season
32.2 adjust the reclose function on the automatic circuit reclosers on all 22-kilovolt feeders on all total fire ban days to permit only one reclose attempt before lockout.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32(a) Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce (BPST) to trial automatic circuit closers</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

32(a) Bushfire Powerline Safety Taskforce (BPST) to trial automatic circuit reclosers

Powercor conducted a trial of SWER ACRs from 25 February to 5 April 2011. SP Ausnet also conducted trials from 23 December 2010 through until 9 May 2011. All affected devices have since been restored to normal operational settings. Due to the particularly benign fire season, there is very little meaningful data to analyse from these trials. The BPST has, however, commissioned research to determine appropriate protection settings for the coming fire season. This research relates to the amount of energy required to cause ignition. In addition, a range of other new technologies is being assessed for their ability to reduce ground fault ignition.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 32(a) has been satisfactorily implemented, however, given the mild summer and the ongoing research commissioned by the BPST in this area, the BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

Automatic Circuit Reclosers (ACRs)

Electricity distribution networks include a number of devices to minimise the risk of injury and damage and to limit the interruption of supply caused by electrical faults. ACRs are one such device. When a fault occurs, an ACR opens to break the circuit and automatically closes after a specified amount of time to reenergise the line. If the fault remains, the ACR will open again re-breaking the circuit. This sequence will repeat a number of times (commonly up to three) before the reclosers lock out requiring power to be restored manually. ACRs are widely used throughout Victoria’s electricity distribution network on both SWER and 22-kilovolt feeder lines.

In response to the VBRC Final Report recommendations 27 and 32, the state established the BPST to investigate the full range of options to reduce the risk of catastrophic bushfires from electricity infrastructure and to research and trial technologies and strategies to reduce the risk of bushfires starting from rural powerlines. Undertaking trials of the suppression of ACRs during the 2010-11 fire season is part of this approach.

RECOMMENDATION 33

The State (through Energy Safe Victoria) require distribution businesses to do the following:

33.1 fit spreaders to any lines with a history of clashing or the potential to do so
33.2 fit or retrofit all spans that are more than 300 metres long with vibration dampers as soon as is reasonably practicable.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33(a) ESV to issue formal direction to distribution businesses to require them to implement a program to identify and address clashing lines</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33(b) ESV to monitor the implementation progress reported by distribution businesses and include in annual pre-summer mitigation audits.</td>
<td>01/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PROGRESS

33(a) ESV to issue formal direction to distribution businesses to require them to implement a program to identify and address clashing lines

ESV wrote to all distribution businesses on 4 January 2011 directing them under section 141(2)(d) of the Electricity Safety Act 1998, to fit spacers in aerial lines, armour rods and vibration dampers in accordance with recommendation 33. The directions take effect from 17 January 2011. All distribution businesses submitted detailed programs to ESV by the 28 February 2011 in relation to these directions as required.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 33(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

33(b) ESV to monitor the implementation progress reported by distribution businesses and include in annual pre-summer mitigation audits

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 33(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 34

The State amend the regulatory framework for electricity safety to strengthen Energy Safe Victoria’s mandate in relation to the prevention and mitigation of electricity caused bushfires and to require it to fulfil that mandate.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34(a) ESV staffing to increase from 90 to 110</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34(b) Amendment to Electricity Safety Act 1998 in relation to prevention and mitigation of electricity caused bushfires.</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34(c) Amendment to Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005 to improve ESV’s corporate governance arrangements</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

34(a) ESV staffing to increase from 90 to 110

At 3 June 2011, ESV advises that staffing numbers have increased to 102. There are another eight positions currently in the recruitment process. ESV anticipates that 107 staff will be employed by 30 June 2011, well within the proposed timeline of 31 December 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 34(a) is progressing satisfactorily. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

34(b) Amendments to Electricity Safety Act 1998

34(c) Amendments to Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The amendments included expanding the purpose of the Electricity Safety Act to encompass reliability and security of electricity supply and to include promoting the mitigation of bushfire danger as one of the objectives of ESV.

New divisions were inserted into the Electricity Safety Act to include bushfire mitigation requirements for certain operators of at risk electrical lines and acceptance and validation of bushfire mitigation plans. In addition, a number of new definitions were included to define, among other things, bushfire mitigation, bushfire mitigation plans and hazardous bushfire risk areas.

The amendments strengthen the regulatory framework for electricity safety in Victoria. In addition, the amendments support ESV’s corporate governance arrangements through requiring the development of a charter of consultation and regulatory practice relating to the preparation of its corporate plan and conduct of enquiries under the Energy Safe Victoria Act.

The amendments to the Electricity Safety Act came into operation in October 2010 to align with the commencement of the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Interim Regulations 2010 (refer to recommendations 28 and 29 for further information).

Finding: The BRCIM considers actions 34(b) and (c) have been satisfactorily implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 35

Victoria Police continue to pursue a coordinated statewide approach to arson prevention and regularly review its approach to ensure that it contains the following elements:

35.1 high level commitment from senior police
35.2 a research program aimed at refining arson prevention and detection strategies
35.3 centralised coordination that includes comprehensive training, periodic evaluation of arson prevention strategies and programs, and promotion of best practice prevention approaches
35.4 a requirement that all fire prone police service areas have arson prevention plans and programs, according to their level of risk.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35(a) Analysis of police arson intelligence products used in the 2009-10 bushfire season</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(b) Analysis of bushfire victim behaviour during the fires of early 2009</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(c) Conduct ‘Operation Firesetter’ statewide anti-bushfire arson police patrols</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(d) Support joint community awareness arson campaign</td>
<td>28/02/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(e) Evaluate joint community awareness arson campaign</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(f) Revised inter agency agreement on preventing bushfire arson</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(g) Anti-arson strategy workshops conducted in high risk areas</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35(h) Development of a research program aimed at refining arson prevention and detection strategies</td>
<td>28/02/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

35(a) Complete an independent analysis of police arson intelligence products used in the 2009-10 bushfire season

The Victoria Police Crime Strategy Group completed an independent analysis of police arson intelligence produced used in the 2009-10 fire season in July 2010. The analysis identified areas for further research as well as a number of key findings and topics for discussion, which will be referred to the Bushfire Action Working Group (BAWG) for consideration. Recommendations for action will be developed based upon feedback received from the working group.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 35(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.
Victoria Police Bushfire Action Working Group (BAWG)

In April 2009, the then Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner - Crime, established the BAWG. The BAWG was tasked to coordinate a statewide approach to arson prevention. Chaired by a Superintendent from the Crime Department, the BAWG included officers from the Crime Department (Operations), Crime Strategy Department, all four Victoria Police Regions, the Victoria Police Education Department, the State Emergency and Security Department, together with the Intelligence and Covert Support Department. Members of the working group include subject matter experts such as the Victoria Police Criminal Profiler and the Officer in Charge of the Arson and Explosives Squad. The BAWG reports directly to the Crime Department Management Group.

The BAWG works across five themes:

- developing a better understanding of bushfire arson
- building effective cooperative partnerships
- delivering a statewide coordinated approach to local action informed by predictive risk assessment
- creating an increased organisational capability.

Among its achievements were the oversight, coordination, development and rollout of the Victoria police bushfire arson prevention and detection strategy, Operation Firesetter, development of research proposals, together with refinements to the Arson and Explosives Investigation Course.

The BAWG met monthly between August 2009 and October 2010. It continued to meet monthly as the coordination group for Victoria Police’s Operation Firesetter during the 2010-11 fire season. It is currently meeting quarterly, however, the schedule will be reviewed during 2011 with meetings likely to become more frequent in the lead-up to the 2011-12 bushfire season.

35(b) Analysis of bushfire victim behaviour during the fires of early 2009

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 35(b) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

35(c) Conduct ‘Operation Firesetter’ statewide anti-bushfire arson police patrols

Due to the relatively benign 2010-11 fire season, Operation Firesetter was only conducted on two days, 31 December 2010 and 1 February 2011. There were no arrests related to fire activity on either day. The original plan to have an independent analysis conducted of the operation did not proceed due to the limited data available. All Victoria Police anti-arson strategies will be reviewed, however, in preparation for the 2011-12 fire season.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 35(c) has been satisfactorily implemented. Given the mild fire season, however, the BRCIM suggests that Operation Firesetter be conducted again next fire season. The BRCIM will revisit action 35(c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
35(d) Support joint community awareness arson campaign

Crime Stoppers, in collaboration with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Bushfire Response, Victoria Police, CFA and HVP Plantations (a private timber plantation company), launched the Bushfire Arson Initiative on 17 December 2010. This initiative included media releases, a television and cinema advertising campaign and posters designed to encourage people to report deliberate or reckless fire lighting throughout the summer to Crime Stoppers by telephoning 1800 333 000. The campaign received coverage on ABC and commercial television news. The advertisement was also telecast on both ABC and commercial television. The posters were widely distributed across Victoria.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 35(d) has been satisfactorily implemented.

35(e) Evaluate joint community awareness arson campaign

Finding: The date for implementation of action 35(e) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

35(f) Revised inter agency agreement on preventing bushfire arson

Finding: The date for implementation of action 35(f) is 30 June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

35(g) Anti-arson strategy workshops conducted in high risk areas

Victoria Police conducted three anti-arson workshops prior to the 2010-11 fire season. These workshops, conducted in Melbourne, Dixons Creek and Ballarat were attended by 44 senior Victoria Police staff from high risk areas across Victoria. These workshops enabled police to develop bushfire arson strategy plans, which importantly identify prevention, intelligence and enforcement priorities and assign individual responsibilities at the local level.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 35(g) has been satisfactorily implemented.

35(h) Development of a research program aimed at refining arson prevention and detection strategies

Victoria Police advised that this research program was not delivered by the due date (28 February 2011) due to funding constraints. Funding was eventually approved in April 2011 for a three year study. While still in the developmental stage, this study, “Understanding the Psychology of Firesetting”, will be the first large scale research project in Australia to empirically identify risk factors, fire arson and recidivist arson, in adults. The project will be conducted in partnership with Monash University, DH, DHS, the Sentencing Advisory Council and courts.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the delayed commencement of this important initiative. The BRCIM will revisit action 35(h) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 36

The Commonwealth, states and territories continue to pursue the National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia, giving priority to producing a nationally consistent framework for data collection and evaluating current and proposed programs in order to identify and share best practice approaches.

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36(a) Progress Report on National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

Recommendation 36 is directed to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update:

Implementation of the various elements of the National Action Plan to Reduce Bushfire Arson in Australia is continuing.

The National Strategy for the Prevention of Bushfire Arson has been finalised and is expected to be considered by the NEMC in mid-2011. The aim of the strategy is to outline the key principles and considerations that should be followed when implementing bushfire arson reduction initiatives.

The second pilot of the Wildfire Arson Investigation Management Course was delivered in April 2011. Currently work is continuing to refine the content of the course. The course will be ready for delivery later in 2011. This course will be used in Australia and New Zealand.

The third annual National Forum for the Prevention of Bushfire Arson is scheduled for 28 June 2011. The forum promotes more effective and collaborative means of preventing and deterring bushfire arson across Australia. The forum draws together experts to identify and discuss examples of bushfire arson prevention and education initiatives, and to progress national priorities for action. The focus this year will be on community education and engagement issues associated with bushfire arson.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

36(a) Progress Report on National Action Plan to reduce bushfire arson

The state noted that recommendation 36 is directed to the Commonwealth but shares the VBRC view that continuing research into fire is fundamental to the advancement of bushfire management.

Senior representatives from Victoria Police, fire services and DOJ have attended each of the forums referred to above, convened by the Commonwealth. A progress report on Victoria’s initiatives in this area is to be submitted to the National Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management. No date has yet been set for this meeting.

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 36(a) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
RECOMMENDATIONS 37-55

As part of chapter 6 in the VBRC’s Final Report, the VBRC examined in detail the state’s planning and building regimes in Victoria which are embedded in detailed and comprehensive regulations. The Commission considered:

There is much scope to substantially restrict development in areas thought to post an unacceptably high bushfire risk by ensuring that strategic policies and the Victoria Planning Provisions (VPP) give more emphasis to human safety.

The VBRC, following a review of the existing planning and building regimes in Victoria explored a number of themes in Chapter 6 of the Final Report. These themes broadly equated to an examination of:

- deficiencies in the mapping of bushfire risk throughout Victoria
- approaches to planning, development and the planning framework
- building regulations and standards.

The VBRC’s recommendations, 37 to 55, advocate a number of fundamental changes to the state’s existing planning and building regimes. In accepting these recommendations, the state has developed a strategic approach to implementation through the development of an Integrated Planning and Building Framework. This framework consists of two components, Bushfire Hazard and Biodiversity Mapping and Planning and Building System Improvements.

These components are addressed through a number of projects to be implemented in response to a range of recommendations and will ensure there are cohesive and integrated changes to the current building and planning regimes. The implementation actions outlined in response to recommendations 37 to 55 are therefore interrelated and dependent on the completion of specific policies and initiatives.

The VBRC’s recommendations are to be implemented progressively by the state over a number of years, with a package of changes to the VPP to be introduced in September 2011.

Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP)

The VPP are standard planning provisions prepared and approved by the Minister for Planning under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. These provisions provide a coordinated and consistent framework for all planning schemes in Victoria.

Planning schemes are drafted by planning authorities (usually local councils) and include a Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and councils must select zones and overlays from the VPP to be included in the planning scheme. The VPP also contains references to incorporated documents which are common to all planning schemes.

The Minister for Planning, other Ministers, public authorities or local councils authorised by the Minister may prepare amendments to the VPP but only the Minister for Planning can approve an amendment. Amendments to provisions within the VPP that are approved will also result in consequential amendments to specified planning schemes which include those provisions.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 37**

The State identify a central point of responsibility for and expertise in mapping bushfire risk to:

37.1 review urgently the mapping criteria at present used by the Country Fire Authority to map the Wildfire Management Overlay, to ensure that the mapping used to determine building and planning controls is based on the best available science and takes account of all relevant aspects of bushfire risk

37.2 map and designate Bushfire prone Areas for the purposes of planning and building controls, in consultation with municipal councils and fire agencies

37.3 finalise the alignment of site-assessment methods for planning and building purposes, taking into account bushfire risk to human safety as well as to property.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>37(a) New statewide bushfire hazard map in place</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(b) Detailed bushfire risk mapping for targeted high risk, high priority areas to assist with local land use and bushfire management risk response plans</td>
<td>31/07/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(c) Detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping for targeted high risk, high priority areas to assist with balancing of conservation of native vegetation with the management of bushfire risk in these locations</td>
<td>31/07/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(d) Establish a dedicated bushfire planning capacity team in DPCD (This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(e) Review of bushfire hazard mapping criteria currently used by CFA in Wildfire Management Overlay (This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(f) Draft single site assessment methodology</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(g) Final single site assessment methodology</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(h) Implement single site assessment methodology</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37(i) Amendment to planning scheme – Victorian Planning Provisions</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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**PROGRESS**

37(a) New statewide bushfire hazard map

The VBRC examined the integration of centralised mapping in Chapter 6 of the Final Report noting that a more strategic, holistic approach to mapping the state’s bushfire risk and designating levels of risk for planning and building purposes is required. In response to the VBRC’s recommendation, the state has committed to develop a new statewide bushfire hazard map. This map will provide a
greater understanding of bushfire hazards and biodiversity information across the state and assist in informing the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

DSE is leading the work on the development of the new statewide bushfire hazard map with the focus on increasing the current level of information available on vegetation data across the state. In many areas across the state, vegetation survey has been limited and details are poorly known. In 2010, DSE released two tenders to facilitate the collection of this data:

- Targeted Vegetation Condition Assessment and Mapping Project – a detailed native vegetation mapping of targeted high risk, high priority areas (including areas in the Yarra Ranges) using fine scale mapping and native vegetation assessments of up to 15,000 hectares (subject to access) within a mapped target area. The project is to provide details on the mapping of patches of remnant vegetation, confirmation of ecological vegetation classes within habitat zones, vegetation quality assessment, estimation of the number of large old trees and incidental sightings of rare and threatened species
- Targeted Vegetation Quadrat Data Collection Project – vegetation data is to be collected at locations across the state to undertake vegetation type (ecological vegetation class) modelling to inform fire hazard mapping and assist in the design and application of prescribed burning.

Both tenders required the collection of data between February and June 2011, with this data to:

- assist with developing local land use and bushfire management risk response plans and policies to balance the needs of native vegetation with the management of bushfire risk in various locations across the state
- improve the understanding of bushfire hazard and biodiversity mapping to determine the balance between bushfire risk mitigation measures and environmental impacts.

DSE has advised that both projects are on track, with final reports on the projects to be provided to DSE in late June 2011. The new statewide bushfire hazard map is on track to be completed by September 2011 and will then be included as part of amendments to the VPP.

DSE has offered to provide the BRCIM with a demonstration of the new statewide bushfire hazard map prior to its inclusion in the VPP. The BRCIM intends to take up DSE’s offer after this Progress Report has been tabled in Parliament.

The whole of Victoria was declared a bushfire prone area on 11 March 2009. This remains in place until September 2011. The development of the new statewide bushfire hazard map will assist in providing relevant information to replace the current designation of the whole of Victoria as “bushfire prone”.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress underway in developing the new statewide bushfire hazard map and is satisfied that this action will be completed for inclusion in the VPP by September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit action 37(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

37(b) Bushfire risk mapping in high risk areas

Following the development of the new statewide bushfire hazard map, detailed mapping of high priority bushfire areas will commence. DSE has advised that contract development for this stage of the statewide bushfire hazard mapping has commenced (Stage Two). This is a longer term action and is not due for completion until July 2012.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 37(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

37(c) Detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping for targeted high risk, high priority areas to assist with balancing of conservation of native vegetation with the management of bushfire risk in these locations

As outlined in the Implementation Plan, the statewide bushfire hazard map will continue to be updated by DSE as information becomes available.

Finding: The date for implementation of implementation action 37(c) is 31 July 2012. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

37(d) Dedicated bushfire planning capacity team in DPCD

In the October 2010 Plan, the state committed to establishing a bushfire planning capacity team within DPCD in response to the VBRC’s planning and rebuilding recommendations that the state place greater consideration on bushfires within the different stages of the planning process and enhance the integration of the planning and building systems.

A new team, the Bushfire Planning Provisions team, was created within the Statutory Planning Systems Reform branch of DPCD in January 2011 and is leading the development of changes to Victoria’s VPP. The team consists of four qualified planners and a Geographic Information System specialist.

DPCD also established a Bushfire Response Planning unit in August 2010 to help people complete rebuilding in fire affected areas and provide specialist planning advice to landowners impacted by the Wildfire Management Overlay (WMO). This unit has taken over the Rebuilding Advisory Service, which was previously part of VBRRA. The Bushfire Response Planning unit provides information and assistance on all aspects of rebuilding in fire affected communities. Further information is available on the DPCD website at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au. For more information on VBRRA, refer to 7.2.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 37(d) has been satisfactorily implemented.

Wildfire Management Overlay (WMO)

As Victoria has one of the highest levels of wildfire risk in the world, wildfire protection is necessary to minimise the risk to life, property, the natural environment and community infrastructure. The WMO is a statutory tool in planning schemes to identify areas where the potential intensity of a wildfire is significant and likely to pose a threat to life and property. To assist in the protection of life and property in these areas, special protection measures are required to assist new development to withstand the passage of a fire. These measures include adequate water supply, access, building siting design and fuel reduced areas around buildings.

The WMO is a map that shows the relevant affected areas and sets out specific written provisions which detail the types of development that require a planning permit, the information to be submitted with a planning permit application and the decision guidelines that councils must consider when they assess a permit application. The relevant planning provisions are contained in Clause 44.06 (Wildfire Management Overlay) of a planning scheme.
A new bushfire overlay is currently being developed to replace the existing WMO used in Victoria’s planning schemes. The development of the new statewide bushfire hazard map (refer to action 37(a)) will assist in the application of the new bushfire overlay.

Existing bushfire provisions, including the WMO, will continue to apply until the new bushfire overlay is introduced. The new bushfire overlay will enable planning schemes to adapt the bushfire overlay to local conditions through schedules to the overlay. DPCD anticipates the transition will take place late in 2011. Further information on the WMO is available from the DPCD website at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/WMO.

### 37(e) Review of bushfire hazard mapping criteria

In the October 2010 Plan, the state committed to review the bushfire hazard mapping criteria currently used by the CFA in WMOs by March 2011. The CFA relies on bushfire hazard mapping as part of its assessment process for site assessments for WMOs.

The VBRC in its Final Report found that the criteria used by the CFA was somewhat limited and called for a review of the criteria used to map bushfire prone areas for the purposes of applying planning and building controls.

DPCD in consultation with the CFA and DSE and other key stakeholders, including the Building Commission and MAV, have reviewed the bushfire hazard mapping criteria and developed a draft hazard mapping criteria. Consultation in relation to the hazard mapping criteria has been ongoing since January 2011 and includes discussions with fire specialists from Monash and Melbourne University, DSE’s Land and Fire Branch and Arthur Rylah Institute (the biodiversity research base for DSE).

During May 2011, independent bushfire experts tested the draft criteria. The BRCIM received a confidential draft of the criteria and methodology in May 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 37(e) has been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM notes that the development of the new bushfire hazard mapping criteria will inform the application of the new bushfire overlay.

### Australian Standard AS 3959-2009 Construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas (AS 3959-2009)

The objective of AS 3959-2009 is to improve the ability of buildings in designated bushfire prone areas to better withstand attack from bushfire and to give a measure of protection to the building occupants (until the fire front passes) as well as to the building itself. AS 3959-2009 prescribes measures for assessing the level of bushfire attack and for the design and construction of buildings in order to improve their resistance to ember attack, radiant heat or flame generated by a bushfire.

AS 3959-2009 was prepared by Standards Australia technical committee and supersedes previous editions, AS 3959-1991 and A3959-1999. The Standard was formally referenced in the BCA on 1 May 2010. Although referenced, the BCA does allow for state variations or deletions of some of its provisions. The State of Victoria has adopted AS 3959-2009 in full.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

AS 3959-2009 incorporates Bushfire Attack Levels (BAL) and methods for determining BAL based on calculated procedures for climate, slope of ground and vegetation. Construction sections are organised in BAL level specific requirements rather than by building components.

The Standard does not guarantee that a building will survive a bushfire event on every occasion. Other factors such as vegetation management, the unpredictable nature and behaviour of fire and weather conditions will all have varying impacts during a bushfire.

37(f) Draft single site assessment

The VBRC recommended that the state finalise the alignment of site assessment methods for planning and building purposes to take into account the protection of life and property.

There are currently two approaches within the Victorian planning and building regimes for determining a building’s potential exposure to bushfire and the radiant heat impacts on a building.

The assessment methodology and assumptions used to assess the level of bushfire attack under AS 3959-2009 and that used in the WMO assessment process differ, potentially leading to different outcomes. To avoid these inconsistencies, the state agreed to develop a single site assessment based on AS 3959-2009.

A Joint Bushfires Working Group, chaired by DPCD and made up of representatives from DSE, the CFA and the Building Commission, was established to oversee the progress of the implementation of the VBRC’s recommendations related to the Integrated Planning and Building Framework, including work on the single site assessment.

The draft single site assessment methodology was developed by DPCD and CFA in consultation with the Building Commission. The CFA engaged the University of Technology Sydney (Centre for Local Government) (UTS) to provide advice in relation to the operation of AS 3959-2009 and its relationship to the existing WMO. The UTS subsequently prepared a report in support of an integrated approach to the WMO and Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)9 assessment processes. The UTS Report was provided on a confidential basis to the BRCIM.

The UTS Report was distributed to the Joint Bushfires Working Group for consideration. At 3 June 2011, the single site assessment methodology was awaiting endorsement by the Minister for Planning for inclusion in the Integrated Planning and Building Framework to be implemented in September 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 37(f) has been satisfactorily implemented as the draft single site assessment is complete. The BRCIM will monitor further progress through actions 37(g) and (h) and the implementation of the single site assessment following inclusion in the package of changes scheduled to be made to the VPP in September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

37(g) Final single site assessment methodology and implementation

37(h) Implementation of single site assessment

The final single site assessment is due to be completed by June 2011 and will be implemented by September 2011 as part of the policy reforms under the state’s Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

9 There are now 6 BAL categories from low to extreme. The BAL takes into consideration a number of factors including the Fire Danger Index, the slope of the land, types of surrounding vegetation and its proximity to any building. Further information on BAL is available from the Building Commission’s website at www.buildingcommission.com.au.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The BRCIM acknowledges that implementation actions across a number of recommendations make up various parts of the Framework. The BRCIM anticipates that further updates on the implementation of the Framework will be provided post the tabling of this Progress Report. It is anticipated that a significant communications program will be undertaken by the state to inform Victorians of the Framework and the changes to the VPP.

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to actions 37(g) and (h) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

37(i) Amendments to planning scheme – Victorian Planning Provisions

The state is preparing a package of improved planning and building requirements to implement the VBRC’s Final Report recommendations. The Implementation Plan provides that amendments to the VPP are due for completion in September 2011.

The BRCIM notes the progress in relation to the state’s new Integrated Planning and Building Framework and received a confidential progress report from DPCD in May 2011 on the status of projects and new policy initiatives developed under this Framework.

DPCD has confirmed that all work in relation to changes to the VPP are on track to be delivered on schedule as set out in the Implementation Plan.

Finding: The BRCIM is satisfied that action 37(i) is progressing well and notes that amendments to the VPP relate to a range of changes and will not be completed until September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this recommendation as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 38

The State implement a regional settlement policy that:

38.1  takes account of the management of bushfire risk, including that associated with small, undeveloped rural lots

38.2  includes a process for responding to bushfire risk at the planning stage for new urban developments in regional cities, the process being similar to that used for new developments in Melbourne’s Urban Growth Zone

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38(a) Conduct eight regional bushfire land use risk assessment studies and produce regional policy responses</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

38(a) Conduct eight regional bushfire land use risk assessment studies and produce regional policy responses

The state committed in the Implementation Plan to develop, in consultation with local government, eight regional land use plans over a period of four years. As part of informing regional land use planning, DPCD will conduct a series of Regional Bushfire Planning Assessments (RBPA).
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The RPBA have commenced with four projects set up across eight regions\(^{10}\). The key purpose of the RBPA is to identify existing and proposed land uses and developments that are potentially vulnerable to bushfire hazards and which require further investigation as part of planning for bushfires in Victoria.

The RPBA will:

- draw together information on the nature of bushfire risk in a given location
- identify spatial characteristics in any given location which are likely to increase the consequences of a bushfire on life and property
- bring together qualitative information to inform an understanding of where land uses and developments potentially conflict with bushfire related hazards in a location.

The RPBA will provide an additional layer of information for regional settlement policy within the context of the implementation of the state’s broader bushfire planning provisions and planning controls (such as the new bushfire overlay described in recommendation 37) to be introduced in September 2011 as part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

The BRCIM was provided with copies of the RBPA project briefs, which were released for tender in April 2011. Contracts were in place in May 2011. A reference group was also established by DPCD to support each project, which includes representation from MAV and councils.

DPCD has advised that the projects are scheduled for completion in August 2011, in advance of the projected deadline of September 2011 as set out in the Implementation Plan.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the progress to date with the RPBA and that further work is continuing and will not be complete until August 2011. The BRCIM will revisit action 38(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

### RECOMMENDATION 39

The State amend the Victoria Planning Provisions relating to bushfire to ensure that the provisions give priority to the protection of human life, adopt a clear objective of substantially restricting development in the areas of highest bushfire risk - giving due consideration to biodiversity conservation - and provide clear guidance for decision makers. The amendments should take account of the conclusions reached by the Commission and do the following:

39.1 outline the State’s objectives for managing bushfire risk through land-use planning in an amended state planning policy for bushfire, as set out in clause 15.07 of the Victoria Planning Provisions

39.2 allow municipal councils to include a minimum lot size for use of land for a dwelling, both with and without a permit, in a schedule to each of the Rural Living Zone, Green Wedge Zone, Green Wedge A Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone

39.3 amend clause 44.06 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to provide a comprehensive Bushfire-prone Overlay provision.

\(^{10}\) Project 1: Metro Regions, Project 2: Loddon Mallee and Hume Regions, Project 3: Barwon South West and Grampians Regions, Project 4: Gippsland Region
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39(a) Implement revised State Planning Policy</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39(b) Review statutory tools for regulating development on small blocks in high risk bushfire areas</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39(c) Develop new bushfire overlay to align with the statewide bushfire hazard mapping</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

39(a) Implement revised State Planning Policy

39(b) Review statutory tools for regulating development on small blocks in high risk bushfire areas

39(c) Develop new bushfire overlay to align with the statewide bushfire hazard mapping

The state has committed to implement actions 39(a), (b) and (c) as part of the second component of the state’s Integrated Planning and Building Framework which is due for completion in September 2011. DPCD is leading the work on these actions in consultation with the CFA and DSE. In May 2011, DPCD provided the BRCIM with a confidential progress report on the status of projects and new policy initiatives developed under the Framework.

Following the completion of the regional bushfire land use risk assessments (refer to recommendation 38) DPCD will implement a revised State Planning Policy. This new policy will form part of a comprehensive package of changes to the VPP. The outcome of the bushfire land use risk assessments will also be used as part of the review of small lots in high bushfire risk areas. This review is part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

DPCD, in conjunction with the CFA, councils and MAV is to also develop a new bushfire overlay. The new overlay will align with the updated statewide bushfire hazard mapping and is to be implemented as part of a package of changes to the VPP.

DPCD has confirmed that all work in relation to these implementation actions is on track to be delivered on schedule, as set out in the Implementation Plan.

It should be noted that the implementation of recommendation 39 is linked to the completion of implementation actions under recommendations 37, 38, 40, 41, 45, 52 and 54.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress in relation to actions 39(a), (b) and (c) and that the date for completion of these actions is September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 40**

The Country Fire Authority amend its guidelines for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions in the Bushfire-prone Overlay in order to accommodate the amendments to the Wildfire Management Overlay that are implemented as a result of recommendation 39 and make the guidelines available to municipal councils and the public. The revised guidelines should do the following:

40.1 substantially restrict new developments and subdivisions in those areas of highest risk in the Bushfire-prone Overlay

40.2 set out the CFA’s guidelines for assessing permit applications for dwellings, non-dwellings and subdivisions - including the minimum defendable space requirements for different risk levels

40.3 clarify that the CFA will approve new developments and subdivisions only if the recommended bushfire protection measures - including the minimum defendable space - can be created and maintained on a continuing basis

40.4 emphasise the need for enduring permit conditions - in particular, conditions for the creation and maintenance of minimum defendable space to be maintained for the life of the development.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>40(a) Amend guidelines for municipal councils and the community to align permit applications with the new planning provisions</td>
<td>30/09/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

**40(a) Amend guidelines for municipal councils and the community to align permit applications with the new planning provisions**

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 40(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 41**

The State:

41.1 amend the Victoria Planning Provisions to require that, when assessing a permit to remove native vegetation around an existing dwelling, the responsible authority and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, as referral authority, take into account fire hazard and give weight to fire protection purposes

41.2 develop guidelines for determining the maximum level of native vegetation removal for bushfire risk mitigation, beyond which level the application would be rejected.
CHAPTER 7.1

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41(a) Design and consult on changes to policy frameworks and the VPPs</td>
<td>31/07/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>41(b) Design and consult on changes to policy framework and VPPs – establish local government native vegetation reference group</td>
<td>31/01/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>41(c) Train DSE, local government and roads management staff on changes to the policy framework</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41(d) Conduct awareness raising and community education on changes to the policy framework (VPP)</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

The implementation of this recommendation forms part of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework. The state has committed to implement the recommendation through a project with two phases: phase one, actions 41(a) and (b) and phase two, actions 41(c) and (d).

41(a) Design and consult on changes to policy frameworks and the VPP

The requirements for the “10/30 rule” are briefly set out in the Implementation Plan. DPCD in conjunction with DSE is developing a position on revising the existing fire protection exemptions and revising the application of the “10/30 rule”. The issue of balancing fire safety with the impacts on biodiversity will be addressed in this paper. In addition, the paper will set out the proposed amendments to the VPP.

The DSE/Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group (the DSE/LGNV Reference Group) will consider these proposals at its next meeting on 5 July 2011. Details on the DSE/LGNV Reference Group are outlined below in relation to action 41(b).

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the progress of action 41(a). The BRCIM will include an update on implementation as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

41(b) Design and consult on changes to policy framework and VPPs – establish local government native vegetation reference group

As part of the development of changes to policy frameworks and the VPP, a joint DSE/LGNV Reference Group has been established to focus on native vegetation management issues associated with the VBRC’s recommendations. The DSE/LGNV Reference Group held its first meeting in January 2011 and meets every six weeks.

The terms of reference of the DSE/LGNV Reference Group are to:

- inform and assist with the implementation of the VBRC’s recommendations – recommendations 39, 41, 60, 61 with consideration for recommendation 62
- provide advice from both a local and state government perspective in relation to issues of implementation and to explore and facilitate solutions

---

11 The “10/30 rule” was introduced by the government in September 2009 for clearing of native vegetation around buildings used for accommodation and will remain in place until 1 March 2012 while the government implements the recommendations of the VBRC. Following this, the “10/30 rule” will be revised with the intention of linking it to areas where the risk of bushfire is greatest. For more information on the “10/30 rule” refer to the DSE website at www.dse.vic.gov.au/land-management/native-vegetation-local-government.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

- better understand the likely costs and capacity implications for councils with increased expectations around native management and bushfire mitigation works, particularly along roadsides
- promote productive communication and dialogue between members.

The DSE/LGNV Reference Group is made up of local government officers from across Victoria with a range of skills in management, planning, environment and roadside management and representatives from DPCD (Planning), DSE (Native Vegetation), VicRoads and the CFA. Local government representatives come from the following councils: Alpine, Casey, Colac Otway, Corangamite, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Golden Plains, Manningham, Moorabool, Nillumbik, Northern Grampians, Swan Hill and Yarra Ranges.

The DSE/LGNV Reference Group will be reviewed after 12 months. MAV provides the secretariat support and there is a rotating chair between MAV and DSE. The DSE/LGNV Reference Group has a defined work plan which sets out relevant milestones for the achievement of implementing each of the VBRC’s recommendations. DSE provided the BRCIM with copies of the minutes from each meeting of the DSE/LGNV Reference Group.

The BRCIM notes the wide ranging membership and skill mix of the DSE/LGNV Reference Group and the frequency of when the group meets. The BRCIM is satisfied that the DSE/LGNV Reference Group is an adequate forum for progressing the VBRC’s recommendations that relate to native vegetation management.

It should be noted that consultation with the DSE/LGNV Reference Group is also a requirement of implementation action 60(c).

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 41(b) has been satisfactorily implemented. As the DSE/LGNV Reference Group is consulting and providing advice in relation to a number of implementation actions across a range of recommendations, the BRCIM will continue to monitor the progress of the DSE/LGNV Reference Group in addressing all these issues.

41(c) **Train DSE, local government and roads management staff on changes to the policy framework**

41(d) **Conduct awareness raising and community education on changes to the policy framework (VPP)**

The state has committed to undertake a comprehensive training and awareness campaign following the completion of changes to the planning policy frameworks and subsequent amendments to the VPP. This includes the training of those working in areas associated with the planning regimes (DSE, local government and roads management workers) to ensure there is an appropriate level of understanding and awareness of the proposed changes and community awareness and education program on the changes.

Both of these actions will not commence until September 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit actions 41(c) and (d) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 42

The Department of Sustainability and Environment develop and administer a collective offset solution for individual landholders who are permitted to remove native vegetation for the purpose of fire protection.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42(a) Develop a native vegetation offset scheme in consultation with councils</td>
<td>14/10/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

42(a) Develop a native vegetation offset scheme in consultation with councils

A central component of mitigating bushfire risks for both existing and new development is the management of vegetation. The development of bushfire related controls will provide greater certainty and guidance to councils and landowners about vegetation removal.

The development of the collective offset scheme will be addressed as part of the second component of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

Finding: The date for the development of a native vegetation offset scheme under recommendation 42 is October 2012. This recommendation is closely aligned to the completion of actions under recommendation 41. The BRCIM will revisit action 42(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 43

The Department of Sustainability and Environment conduct biodiversity mapping identifying flora, fauna and any threatened species throughout Victoria and make the results publicly available. The format used should be compatible with that used for Bushfire-prone Area mapping.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>43(a) Undertake detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping</td>
<td>14/10/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

43(a) Undertake detailed vegetation and biodiversity mapping

Finding: The date for completion of action 43(a) is October 2012 and is dependent on the completion of recommendations within the Integrated Planning and Building Framework. The BRCIM will revisit action 43(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 44**
The Country Fire Authority produce for community guidance material on fire-resistant landscape and garden design, including a list of fire-resistant species.

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>44(a) Produce community guidance material on fire resistant landscape design</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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**Finding:** The date for the implementation of action 44(a) is 31 December 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 45**
The State press municipal councils - in particular, Murrindindi Shire Council - to urgently adopt a bushfire policy in their Local Planning Policy Framework and incorporate bushfire risk management in their planning policies and strategies for rebuilding communities such as Marysville, Kinglake and others affected by the January-February 2009 fires.

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>45(a) Produce one or more model local planning policies</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>45(b) Pilot model in five planning schemes</td>
<td>31/12/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45(c) Remaining councils to implement model</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>45(d) Murrindindi Shire local policy planning framework to include a bushfire local planning policy</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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**PROGRESS**

**45(a) Produce one or more model local planning policies**

**45(b) Pilot model in five planning schemes**

**45(c) Remaining councils to implement model**
DPCD is working on developing model local planning policies. Following the development of these models, DPCD and MAV will pilot these models in conjunction with a number of local councils across a range of planning schemes.

The development of the planning policies and the introduction of a pilot in a number of planning schemes is closely linked with the Integrated Planning and Building Framework and the proposed changes to the VPP which are not due for completion until September 2011. The
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

BRCIM received a confidential progress report from DPCD in May 2011 on the status of projects and new policy initiatives developed under this Framework. DPCD has confirmed that all work in relation to the development of model local planning policies is on track to be delivered by September 2011.

**Finding:** The development and implementation of local planning policies under actions 45(a), (b) and (c) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit these actions as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

### 45(d) Murrindindi Shire local policy planning framework to include a bushfire local planning policy

DPCD has been working extensively with Murrindindi Shire Council to support a number of local planning initiatives. This has included the DPCD Hume Regional Office providing support for the Murrindindi Council in terms of specific queries, matters of interpretation and general support. The Hume Regional Office has also provided support in relation to a number of planning scheme amendments.

DPCD is also assisting the Murrindindi Council in working towards incorporating a bushfire risk into their local planning policy. DPCD prepared a draft MSS for consideration by council officers. The MSS sets the future direction for council’s decision making and land use planning including policy development activities. DPCD and Murrindindi Council are working on progressing this review. Due to limited resources in the council, DPCD may assist the council in engaging a consultant to review the council’s MSS.

In addition, DPCD has worked with the Murrindindi Council and VBRA in developing a vision for a sustainable future for the communities of the Kinglake Ranges, Flowerdale and Toolangi. A Kinglake Flowerdale Toolangi Draft Plan and Design Framework is being developed to guide future population growth, land use and development, infrastructure and service provision, community safety and the character and identity of the local community. The plan will include seven directions to deliver the communities’ vision and values for the area with an emphasis on bushfire safety in the context of land use planning.

This plan will be used in the development of the Murrindindi’s local planning policy and is seen as a first generation of strategic plans to be undertaken with a greater emphasis on risk mitigation and increased scrutiny of settlement planning development proposals and infrastructure planning.

The development of local bushfire planning policy will not be included in the Murrindindi Local Planning Framework until elements of the state’s Integrated Planning and Building Framework are in place. This will not occur until September 2011 at the earliest.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the progress to date in relation to action 45(d). As this action is now linked to the state’s Integrated Planning and Building Framework, which will not be complete until September 2011, the BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

### RECOMMENDATION 46

The State develop and implement a retreat and resettlement strategy for existing developments in areas of unacceptably high bushfire risk, including a scheme for non-compulsory acquisition by the State of land in these areas.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

STATE’S COMMITMENT

The government is currently developing a program for the non-compulsory buy back of properties exposed to unacceptably high bushfire risk. An outline of the program is provided in the Implementation Plan. Further details of the program will not be finalised until after comprehensive consultation with the community has been undertaken in high risk areas. DOJ has responsibility for implementing the program.

As this is a new commitment in the Implementation Plan, there are no specific actions for this recommendation. It is anticipated that DOJ will provide further details on the program to the BRCIM when these are available.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit recommendation 46 as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 47

Standards Australia do the following:

47.1 amend the objective of AS 3959-2009, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas, to ensure that it incorporates reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack

47.2 review, and amend as appropriate, the testing methods prescribed in its standards for Tests on Elements of Construction for Buildings Exposed to Simulated Bushfire Attack (AS 1530.8.1 and AS 1530.8.2) to ensure that, so far as is possible, the methods provide a reliable predictor of the performance of construction elements under bushfire conditions.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<td>47(a) Building Commission to meet with Standards Australia to confirm support for changes to AS 3959-2009. Outcomes to be confirmed in writing.</td>
<td>30/11/2011 Complete</td>
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PROGRESS

47(a) Building Commission to meet with Standards Australia to confirm support for changes to AS 3959-2009

The VBRC recommended Standards Australia amend AS 3959-2009 and review and amend as appropriate, testing methods prescribed in a number of other Australian Standards. The state, while supporting this recommendation, has no direct control over the development or amendment of any Australian Standards.

The Building Commissioner wrote to Standards Australia in November 2010 regarding both of these issues and other issues associated with recommendations 48 and 50. Standards Australia responded in writing in December 2010 advising that its Technical Committee (FP-020) will consider the incorporation of reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack into any future amendments of AS 3959-2009.

Standards Australia also advised that it will work in conjunction with the ABCB to ensure that any changes to AS 3959-2009 align with the amendment of performance standards in the BCA
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

(now part of the NCC Series). The ABCB is considering such amendments to the NCC Series as part of its response to recommendation 48. A copy of correspondence between the Building Commission and Standards Australia was provided to the BRCIM.

Standards Australia’s Technical Committees FP-018 and FP-020 are undertaking preliminary work in relation to the review and amendment of testing methods prescribed in its standards for Tests on Elements of Construction for Buildings Exposed to Simulated Bushfire Attack (Australian Standards AS 1530.8.1 and AS 1530.8.2). Any proposed amendments to these standards will occur through the normal standards development processes.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 47(a) has been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM notes the commitment of Standards Australia to progress amendments to AS 3959-2009 and review and investigate possible amendments to other standards. Given the general timeframe for the development and amendment of Australian Standards, the BRCIM will revisit the issue of amending AS 3959-2009 as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 48**

Australian Building Codes Board do the following:

48.1 amend the performance requirements in the Building Code of Australia to ensure that they incorporate reducing the risk of ignition from ember attack

48.2 work with Standards Australia to effect expeditious continuing review and development of AS 3959-2009, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-prone Areas, and other bushfire-related standards referred to in the Building Code of Australia


48.4 amend the Building Code of Australia to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)

48.5 include in the Building Code of Australia bushfire construction provisions for non-residential buildings that will be occupied by people who are particularly vulnerable to bushfire attack, such as schools, child care centres, hospitals and aged care facilities.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<tr>
<td>48(a) Building Commission to liaise with the Australian Building Codes Board to confirm Victoria’s support for the VBRC recommendations 48.1, 48.2 and 48.3</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48(b) Write to the Commonwealth and all jurisdictions seeking free access to building codes and standards</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48(c) Place the issue of free access to building codes and standards at the next Australian Building Ministers’ Forum</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

The state supports this recommendation noting, however, that it is directed to the ABCB.

48(a) Building Commission to liaise with the Australian Building Codes Board to confirm Victoria’s support for the VBRC recommendations 48.1, 48.2 and 48.3

The ABCB, following the release of the Final Report of the VBRC, published a media release in August 2010 stating that the ABCB would work closely with the Commonwealth, Victorian and other state and territory administrations to contribute to improving further the regulatory environment for building in bushfire prone areas in an expeditious and robust manner. The ABCB advised the Premier at this time that the ABCB would engage with industry and other stakeholders in the weeks following the release of the VBRC’s Final Report.

The Building Commission also wrote to the ABCB in November 2010 seeking the ABCB’s support and cooperation in assisting in the implementation of actions arising from recommendation 48 including amending performance standards in the BCA (now part of the NCC Series) and also the review and amendment of AS 3959-2009. The Building Commission also requested these matters be placed on the ABCB’s work agenda and provide the necessary priority and resources to address the matters as soon as possible. A copy of this letter was provided to the BRCIM as evidence.

The Building Commission has advised that the ABCB has committed to support and work with the Building Commission in relation to the implementation of the VBRC’s recommendations.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 48(a) has been satisfactorily implemented. It is noted that the Building Commission will continue to liaise with the ABCB in relation to the VBRC’s recommendations.

48(b) Write to the Commonwealth and all jurisdictions seeking free access to building codes and standards

Victoria has made a long standing commitment to the provision of free access to the BCA and Australian Standards. While the VBRC recommended free online access to Australian Standards, both the Productivity Commission (Standard Setting and Laboratory Accreditation November 2006 — recommendation 7.3) and the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (Housing Regulations in Victoria October 2005 – recommendation 5.1) have also previously made such recommendations.

The current funding model for both the BCA and Standards Australia requires support and a funding commitment from all Australian jurisdictions prior to the implementation of free access to bushfire related standards. At the BMF12 in July 2010, members agreed to provide the minimum government requirement to fund the operations of the ABCB and to reconsider the issue of funding a free online code in 2013-14. This decision, however, was made prior to the release of the VBRC Final Report on 31 July 2010.

The former Victorian Minister for Planning wrote to the Commonwealth and all state and territory members of the BMF in October 2010 regarding the issue of free access to building codes and standards.

12 The BMF is not a formal Ministerial Council but an adhoc body that reports to the Council of Australian Governments. The purpose of the BMF is to develop a nationally consistent building code based on minimum necessary regulation, which is done through the ABCB.
The Building Commission also wrote to Standards Australia in November 2010 seeking free online access to AS 3959-2009 and other standards referred to in AS 3959-2009 and any other bushfire related Australian standards referred to in the BCA. The Building Commission met with Standards Australia in May 2011 to discuss this and other issues associated with implementing the VBRC’s recommendations.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 48(b) has been satisfactorily implemented as the state has fulfilled its commitment to write to the Commonwealth and all jurisdictions to seek free access to building codes and standards. The BRCIM notes the ongoing work required at the Commonwealth level to enable free access to building standards and codes. Although this action is complete, the BRCIM will provide an update on any progress made in relation to the issue of free access to building codes and standards as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**48(c) Place the issue of free access to building codes and standards at the next Australian Building Ministers’ Forum**

The Building Commission and DPCD have advised that the matter of free access to building codes and standards was placed on the agenda of the BMF which was to be held in Melbourne on 7 April 2011. The Commonwealth, however, deferred this meeting and as at 3 June 2011, there has been no new date set.

The Building Commission has advised that the issue of free online access for standards and codes was also considered by the ABCB at its board meeting of 14 April 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 48(c) has been satisfactorily implemented as the matter has been placed on the BMF agenda. It is noted, however, that further details on the arrangements allowing for free online access to bushfire related standards are yet to be determined. Although this action is complete, the BRCIM will provide an update on whether any progress on this matter has been made as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 9**

The State modify its adoption of the Building Code of Australia for the following purposes:

49.1 to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)

49.2 to apply bushfire construction provisions to non-residential buildings that will be occupied by people who are particularly vulnerable to bushfire attack, such as schools, child care centres, hospitals and aged care facilities

49.3 other than in exceptional circumstances, to apply a minimum AS 3959-2009 construction level of BAL-12.5 to all new buildings and extensions in bushfire-prone areas.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49(a) ABCB to develop options for Australian Building Ministers’ Forum</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(b) Building Commission researching case studies of house survival from 2009</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49(c) Building Commission continuing to collect data for ABCB and Standards Australia</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(d) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to apply minimum BAL 12.5</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(e) Complete a project on improving bushfire safety for vulnerable people (eg. schools, hospitals, childcare)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(f) Fund Victoria’s contribution to ABCB development of National Standards <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(g) Convene expert panel on performance requirements for non-residential buildings <em>(This action is from the October 2010 Plan)</em></td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(h) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements</td>
<td>31/03/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(i) Develop guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings</td>
<td>When the national standard is complete*</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(j) Liaise with ABCB to confirm timelines for inclusion in 2013 Building Code of Australia</td>
<td>No date**</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(k) Removal of the ‘deemed-to-satisfy’ provision for the construction of buildings in the BAL-FZ category</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRESS**

**49(a) ABCB to develop options for Australian Building Ministers’ Forum (BMF)**

This action is directed at the ABCB which is to develop options for the BMF. A BMF was scheduled for 7 April 2011 in Melbourne but was deferred by the Commonwealth. As of 3 June 2011, a new date for the BMF has not been set.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to 49(a) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**49(b) Building Commission researching case studies of house survival from 2009**

The Building Commission committed to undertake research in conjunction with the CFA in relation to house survival during the 2009 bushfires. The work on case studies is ongoing, however, the Building Commission has advised that it has been unable to identify suitable projects to use for case studies as there are few, if any, alternative solutions developed for BAL-FZ* sites.

The Building Commission will continue to identify projects that could be used as appropriate case studies and will provide further advice to the BRCIM in due course.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the information provided by the Building Commission and that work in relation to action 49(b) is ongoing. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

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13 Previous due date 31/03/2012.
14 Previous due date 01/08/2012.
15 BAL-FZ (the flame zone) refers to direct exposure to flames from the fire front in addition to heat flux over 40 kW/m² and ember attack.
CHAPTER 7.1

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49(c) Building Commission continuing to collect data for ABCB and Standards Australia

The Building Commission is continuing to monitor and collect information from the VBRRRA Community Service Hubs and the CFA. Additional information is obtained through general enquiries.

The Building Commission met with both the ABCB and Standards Australia to discuss this issue and other bushfire project matters in May 2011. The collection of data is continuing.

Finding: As work in relation to action 49(c) is ongoing, the BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

49(d) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to apply minimum BAL 12.5

The state has agreed to modify its adoption of the BCA to apply a minimum AS 3959-2009 construction level of BAL 12.5 to all new buildings and extensions in bushfire prone areas. The implementation of this action is dependent, however, on the availability of the new statewide hazard map (to be developed in response to recommendation 37) and the designation of bushfire prone areas in order to apply a minimum BAL 12.5 construction requirement.

The Building Commission is working with DPCD, DSE and the CFA on the proposed amendments to the Victorian Building Regulations 2006.

DPCD has advised that the drafting of amendments to the Building Regulations 2006 has commenced and will run in parallel with the implementation of recommendation 37 (refer to recommendation 37 for further details). It is anticipated that the new building regulations will be in place by 9 September 2011, which is the date when the current building regulations expire.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress underway in relation to action 49(d). The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

49(e) Complete a project on improving bushfire safety for vulnerable people (eg. schools, hospitals, childcare)

49(g) Convene expert panel on performance requirements for non-residential buildings

49(h) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements

Actions 49(e), (g) and (h) are interrelated and involve the development of performance requirements for non-residential buildings. The BRCIM will provide an update on progress in relation to all three actions. The performance requirements will address those buildings whose occupants are vulnerable to bushfire attack. It is anticipated that this work will inform a national process for the development of a national construction standard.
An expert panel on performance requirements for non-residential buildings has been set up and is convened by the Building Commission. The panel met in February 2011 to discuss the scope and strategy for non-residential buildings and prescriptive design inputs for those buildings. Experts on the panel include fire engineers and people experienced in bushfire protection and mitigation to provide advice on defendable space requirements.

The Building Commission met with the ABCB on 5 May 2011 to discuss the national process and to progress Victoria’s request for the development of a national standard. The ABCB is also represented on the expert panel to ensure that any future BCA amendments are consistent and considered as part of any future work.

Further work on the performance requirement has continued with the expert panel meeting again in May 2011. A table of design inputs was prepared and provided to the BRCIM as evidence. This information will be instrumental in informing further work on the development of safety measures for non-residential buildings. The panel will continue to refine and finalise the requirements by September 2011. It is intended that the performance requirements will be included in an amendment to the Building Regulations 2006 in March 2012.

Finding: Work in relation to actions 49(e) and 49(h) is ongoing and the BRCIM is satisfied with the progress that has been made to date. The BRCIM will revisit actions 49(e) and 49(h) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

The BRCIM is satisfied that action 49(g) has been satisfactorily implemented with an expert panel being convened to enable work to progress on the development of performance requirements.

49(f) Victoria’s funding of the development of national standards

The previous government announced funding as part of Victoria’s contribution to the development of ABCB national standards. The Building Commission will liaise with the ABCB on the payments and timing of funding. An MOU between DPCD and the Building Commission has been drafted which includes funding for the ABCB.

Finding: This action is long term and is not due for completion until June 2012. The BRCIM will revisit action 49(f) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

49(i) Guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings

The BCA provides a classification system for a building or part of a building. Class 9 buildings include health care, assembly or aged care buildings.

The state in the Implementation Plan advised that the development of guidelines for retrofitting Class 9 buildings is dependent on the development of a national standard.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 49(i) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

49(j) Inclusion of national standard in 2013 Building Code of Australia

As outlined in actions 49(e) and (g), the development of performance requirements for non-residential buildings is underway. Work undertaken as part of the performance requirements will inform the development of a national standard for public use buildings.

The Building Commission will be working with the ABCB in relation to the development of a national standard.

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16 A defendable space between vegetation and a building is an area managed to minimise fuel loads to inhibit the fire path and reduce the effects of heat, flame and ember attack.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**Finding:** The development of a national standard is a long term action. The BRCIM will revisit action 49(j) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**49(k) Removal of the ‘deemed-to-satisfy’ provision for the construction of buildings in the BAL-FZ category**

Recommendation 49.1 refers to the state modifying its adoption of the BCA to ensure the deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ is removed.

The Implementation Plan makes no specific reference to the removal of this provision, however, the Building Commission has advised that the case studies to be undertaken in action 49(a) will include a comparison of buildings constructed using the “deemed-to-satisfy” provisions as against alternative solutions. Information from these studies will be used by the Building Commission as part of a position paper to the ABCB and Standards Australia on the ongoing review of AS 3959-2009. A proposal is currently under development to meet the intent of this recommendation.

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 49(k) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDATION 50</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standards Australia move expeditiously to develop a standard for bushfire sprinklers and sprayers.</td>
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**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50(a) Liaise with Standards Australia on bushfire sprinklers standards</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRESS**

**50(a) Liaise with Standards Australia on bushfire sprinklers standards**

Recommendation 50 of the VBRC’s Final Report is one of a number of recommendations not aimed at the State of Victoria. The VBRC recommended that Standards Australia accelerate the development of a standard for bushfire sprinklers and sprayers as there is currently no Australian Standard. DPCD and the Plumbing Industry Commissioner have agreed to liaise with Standards Australia in relation to the development of this standard.

The Plumbing Industry Commission/Building Industry Commission wrote to Standards Australia in November 2010 outlining the Victorian Government’s commitment to implementing the VBRC’s recommendations including the development of a new Australian standard on bushfire sprinklers and sprayers under recommendation 50. The Plumbing Industry Commission requested that Standards Australia support this recommendation and include the development and implementation of the standard as a priority on its workplan. The Plumbing Industry Commission offered in-kind support as part of the development of the new standard.

Standards Australia advised in December 2010 that a project to develop a standard for bushfire sprinklers and sprayers had been approved as a Standards Australia resourced project. Standards Australia has established a committee to develop this standard and the Plumbing Industry Commission is represented on this committee. The first meeting of the committee occurred on 17 May 2011. The committee has proposed an indicative timeframe for the development of the standard and discussions are ongoing.
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**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the commitment of Standards Australia to progress the development of a bushfire sprinkler and sprayer standard. The standard is expected to be completed in 2012. Given the general timeframe for development of new Australian Standards, the BRCIM will revisit action 50(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 51**

The Victorian Building Commission, in conjunction with the Country Fire Authority, develop, publish and provide to the community and industry information about ways in which existing buildings in bushfire-prone areas can be modified to incorporate bushfire safety measures.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51(a)</td>
<td>Develop guide to retrofitting homes for a bushfire</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51(b)</td>
<td>Distribute guide to retrofitting homes across Victoria</td>
<td>30/11/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51(c)</td>
<td>Conduct targeted education program of retrofitting commencing with 52 high risk bushfire areas</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51(d)</td>
<td>Conduct consumer seminars on bushfire safety building issues</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRESS**

51(a) **Develop guide for retrofitting homes for a bushfire**

51(b) **Distribute guide for retrofitting homes across Victoria**

In October 2010, a new guide to assist homeowners in high risk bushfire areas retrofit their homes was launched. The guide, *A guide to retrofit your home for better protection from a bushfire* (the Retrofit Guide), was developed by the Building Commission in conjunction with the CFA to provide practical advice to individuals on upgrading their existing homes to be better protected from bushfires.

The Retrofit Guide is divided into a number of parts. The first part addresses retrofitting homes to protect against ember attack, while the second section addresses retrofitting homes for the six BAL levels. The BAL referred to in the Retrofit Guide provides a reference for owners and builders to the level of potential risk to their property during a bushfire. The Retrofit Guide provides a list of building recommendations to retrofit homes to withstand bushfires up to and including BAL-29. The list of recommendation is not, however, suitable for homes deemed to be in BAL-40 and BAL FZ categories. In addition, the Retrofit Guide covers aspects for flooring, walls, windows, skylights, external doors, eaves, gutters and vents for each BAL to minimise the risk.

Many homes in bushfire prone areas pre-date AS 3959-2009 that specifies requirements for the construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas in order to improve their resistance to bushfire attack from burning embers, radiant heat, flame contact and combinations of the three attack forms. While AS 3959-2009 is designed to improve the performance of buildings when subjected to bushfire attack in designated bushfire prone areas there can be no guarantee that a building will survive a bushfire event on every occasion due to the unpredictable nature and behaviour of fire and the difficulties associated with extreme weather conditions.
CHAPTER 7.1

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Existing homes in bushfire prone areas are unlikely to meet the increased levels of bushfire protection delivered by AS 3959-2009 for new homes. While retrofitting does not eliminate risk, it can substantially increase a building’s resilience to bushfire attack.

The Retrofit Guide was relaunched in January 2011 in Traralgon to encourage more Victorians in regional areas who are rebuilding or renovating to consider retrofitting their homes.

The Retrofit Guide is freely available from the Building Commission’s website (www.buildingcommission.com.au) with copies circulated to local councils, fire stations and distributed at bushfire expos (held in many of the high risk bushfire townships) and seminars. In addition, the CFA has distributed the Retrofit Guide at all its community meetings for residents in high risk bushfire areas.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers that actions 51(a) and (b) have been satisfactorily implemented.

51(c) Consumer education on bushfire safety issues

Following the launch of the Retrofit Guide in October 2010, the CFA and the Building Commission commenced a targeted education program on retrofitting homes, commencing with individuals who own homes in the 52 high risk bushfire areas.

As part of the CFA’s community engagement strategy, the CFA has set up a Home Bushfire Advice Service (refer to action 1(l)). The service enables the CFA Fire Safety Officers to provide specialised site assessment for residents in high bushfire risk areas. The CFA, through this service, can assist individuals in understanding their risk when exposed to a bushfire (psychological impacts), advising individuals what they are required to do to manage their property to reduce fire risk (vegetation management and potential improvements) and how to write a bushfire survival plan. Advice given through the service is tailored and personalised and includes a written report. Copies of the Retrofit Guide are distributed as part of the service. Individuals may request an appointment online and the service is offered all year round.

In addition, staff from the Building Commission have attended the VBRRA Community Service Hubs at Kinglake and Marysville. Technical officers continue to work 2.5 days a week from the Rebuilding Advisory Centres in Kinglake and Marysville to provide localised advice to residents and practitioners in relation to building related matters.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 51(c) has been satisfactorily implemented, however, the BRCIM notes that consumer and industry programs will be ongoing with activities often driven by changes to various aspects of bushfire safety or building and planning in bushfire risk areas. The BRCIM will revisit action 51(c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

51(d) Conduct consumer seminars on bushfire safety building issues

As outlined in the Implementation Plan, the Building Commission has held a number of seminars for consumers and building practitioners.

The Building Commission in conjunction with VBRRA also attended a number of bushfire expos at Whittlesea, Kinglake, Marysville and Callignee. Further seminars and events will be conducted across the state in the future as required.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 51(d) has been satisfactorily implemented. The Building Commission continues to run consumer and industry seminars on an “as needs basis” and publishes publications as required in response to issues or new developments and changes to the building regulatory framework.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**Bushfire Compliant Homes**

Two affordable demonstration homes for bushfire affected communities were constructed in Marysville and Kinglake. The homes were part of a joint initiative between DHS, VBRRA and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) and a competition run in which Victorian builders and architects were invited to submit tenders for the design and construction of three-bedroom homes that were six-star energy rated and BAL 40 bushfire compliant.

The winning teams built the demonstration homes as an example of affordable housing options for people who lost homes in the February 2009 bushfires. A base construction price of $150,000 was fixed for all contracts entered into up until May 2011 and the offer was available to residents rebuilding on their own land who lost a property during the February 2009 bushfires and wished to rebuild. The pricing was subject to CPI increases and adjustments to specific site conditions. The price covered the construction of the house but not external services such as consultancy fees and external works.

The homes are designed to offer home builders a choice, with each design having a different approach and construction methodology and flexibility to enable additional living places or bedrooms.

Wheeler Design & Construction Pty Ltd with architect Visionary Design Development constructed a demonstration home at 58 Falls Road, Marysville. The Link Building Group Pty Ltd with Buckerfield Architects constructed the demonstration home at 3256 Healesville-Kinglake Road, Kinglake.

The demonstration homes were open for public inspection until May 2011.

![Bushfire compliant home at 58 Falls Rd, Marysville](image1.jpg)  ![Bushfire compliant home at 3256 Kinglake Rd, Kinglake](image2.jpg)

**RECOMMENDATION 52**

The State develop and implement, in consultation with local government, a mechanism for sign-off by municipal councils of any permit conditions imposed under the Bushfire-prone Overlay and the regular assessment of landowners’ compliance with conditions.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52(a) Develop a mechanism for municipal sign off by councils of bushfire permit conditions (ongoing enforcement of future landowner compliance)</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRESS

52(a) Develop a mechanism for municipal sign off by councils of bushfire permit conditions

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress in relation to action 52(a) is ongoing and related to the Integrated Planning and Building Framework. The statutory mechanism will be introduced in September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 53

The State amend section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962 to require that a vendor’s statement include whether the land is in a designated Bushfire-prone Area, a statement about the standard (if any) to which the dwelling was constructed, the bushfire attack level assessment at the time of construction (where relevant) and a current bushfire attack level assessment of the site of the dwelling.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53(a) Amend section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53(b) Building inspectors to be encouraged to consider bushfire construction requirements in inspections and reports</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53(c) Consumers to be encouraged to use retrofitting guide</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>See 51(b) and (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53(d) Conduct seminars for consumers on bushfire safety building issues</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>See 51(d)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROGRESS

53(a) Amend section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962

An amendment to section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962 will be developed to require vendor’s statements to include a disclosure where properties are located in a bushfire prone area. The new amendment will be developed following the roll out of the Integrated Planning and Building Framework and changes to the state’s planning policy.

Finding: Action 53(a) is dependent on the implementation of actions under recommendation 39 which are not due for completion until September 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

53(b) Building construction requirements available in inspections and reports

The Building Commission and DPCD have been working with building inspectors to ensure, where possible, that pre-property inspections include consideration of bushfire construction standards in inspections and reports.

Archicentre is the national provider of a comprehensive range of design, advice and inspection services to Australian homebuyers, builders, renovators, business owners, property investors, designers, draftspersons, governments and businesses and has established a Bushfire Ready
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Inspection Service. The Bushfire Ready Inspection Service was launched in October 2010 and is an adaptation of the architects program that has provided Victorian homeowners with professional design and construction advice for the past 30 years.

The Bushfire Ready Inspection Service provides home owners with onsite inspection, a BAL assessment so home owners know their fire risk, bushfire protection recommendations for all building elements and a written report listing the most appropriate actions to be taken. The service is designed for those living in higher risk bushfire areas such as the Dandenongs, the Yarra Valley and the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas.

Additional information is available for households in the Building Commission’s Retrofit Guide. Further information on the Retrofit Guide is included under recommendation 51.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 53(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

53(c) Consumers to be encouraged to use retrofitting guide

53(d) Conduct seminars for consumers on bushfire safety building issues

Following discussions with the Building Commission, actions 53(c) and (d) will not be reported against, as these are duplicated actions. Action 53(c) is the same as actions 51(b) and (c) and action 53(d) is the same as action 51(d). For further details, please refer to recommendation 51.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that actions 53(c) and (d) are no longer applicable and will be reported against in recommendation 51 (actions 51(b), (c) and (d)).

**RECOMMENDATION 54**

The State amend the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* to enable the Chief Officer to delegate the power to issue fire prevention notices.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<th>STATUS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54(a) Introduce legislation to amend <em>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</em> to allow the Chief Officer to delegate to issue fire prevention notices</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRESS**

54(a) **Introduce legislation to amend the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 to allow the Chief Officer to delegate to issue fire prevention notices**

DOJ is preparing an amendment to the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* (the CFA Act) to give the Chief Officer of the CFA the power to delegate his or her responsibility to issue fire prevention notices to other CFA personnel if required. This would allow greater flexibility, particularly in cases where a municipal fire prevention officer may not have acted, or fails to issue a notice.

**Finding:** It is anticipated that legislation to amend the CFA Act will be presented to Parliament in the latter part of 2011. The BRCIM will revisit action 54(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
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### RECOMMENDATION 55

The State initiate the development of education and training options to improve understanding of bushfire risk management in the building and planning regimes by:

55.1 providing regular training and guidance material to planning and building practitioners

55.2 helping a suitable tertiary institution design and implement a course on bushfire planning and design in Victoria.

### STATE’S COMMITMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55(a) Provide industry and consumer education on interim bushfire shelter regulations</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(b) Establish an Architects Bushfire Home Service</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(c) Update practice notes and guidelines on AS 3959-2009</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(d) Prepare media material on AS3959-2009</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(e) Implement information and training program on new bushfire planning provisions</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(f) University of Technology Sydney to conduct short course on Development and Building in Bushfire Prone Areas</td>
<td>25/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(g) Further three short courses planned for 2010-11 – see 55(f)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(h) Subsidise up to 90 places on short courses – see 55(f)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(i) Ongoing funding of $50K per annum for subsidised places – see 55(f)</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(j) Continue to run industry and community education seminars at regular intervals</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55(k) Commence discussions with tertiary institutions to develop a bushfire planning and design course</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROGRESS

**55(a) Provide industry and consumer education on interim bushfire shelter regulations**

On 11 November 2009, the Victorian Government introduced the Building Amendment (Private Bushfire Shelter Construction) Interim Regulations 2009. These regulations were subsequently replaced by the Building Amendment (Private Bushfire Shelter Construction) Interim Regulations 2010. The 2010 regulations adopted the national performance standard for Private Bushfire Shelters 2010 Part 1 which provide guidance on the design of private bushfire shelters.
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The 2010 regulations require a building permit to be obtained for private bushfire shelters (bushfire bunkers) prior to construction. Bushfire shelters have to comply with performance requirements set out in the Interim Regulations such as safe access and exit and maintaining tenable conditions within the shelter for the period of occupancy.

The Building Commission has held a number of seminars for industry and consumers on the Interim Bushfire Shelter Regulations. Seminars were held in Castlemaine, Melbourne, Traralgon, Colac and South Morang. The seminars were scheduled so that industry practitioners and consumers attended at different times.

These seminars were promoted through the Building Commissioner’s website (www.buildingcommission.com.au), its eBulletin, radio interviews and advice was sent via email to major stakeholders including Australian Institute of Building Surveyors, Building Designers Association of Victoria, Housing Industry of Australia, Master Builders Association of Victoria and the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group.

The Building Commission continues to run seminars on an “as needs basis”.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 55(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

55(b) Establishing an Architects Bushfire Homes Service

Following the February 2009 bushfires, the Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) was contacted by more than 70 of its members offering various forms of pro bono assistance to the recovery and rebuilding effort. The Building Commission also convened a series of roundtables with representatives of the building industry, including the OVGA following the February bushfires.

The result was the establishment of the Bushfire Homes Service to offer those who lost their homes in the February 2009 bushfires access to pro bono architectural expertise in the form of a selection of architect-designed plans and one free consultation with an architect to assess how these designs may meet individual needs prior to rebuilding.

A design brief was sent to all Institute members who were asked to provide designs based on higher BALs and the requirements of AS 3959-2009. Twenty-five submissions were received and of these, the OVGA with the assistance of representatives from the Institute, reviewed and put 18 house designs on offer to the public.

The home designs apply key principles to ensure the homes are as resistant to the threat of fire as possible and use low or non-combustible materials. The homes also have a strong focus on sustainability and liveability but also meet a range of budgets and conditions.

The Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (AIQS) prepared independent estimates of the likely range of costs associated with the designs presented. The AIQS costs are estimates only and individuals were strongly encouraged to review independently the design and costs.

Following the establishment of VBRA, access to the Bushfire Homes Service was through the VBRA website. People who lost their homes in the bushfires were able to view the range of house designs.
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designs on offer and register their interest in the service. Those who registered interest were encouraged to meet with the architect of the design they selected and obtain a BAL assessment for their property. The BAL determines the construction methods to be used including requirements in relation to factors such as FDI, land slope and types of surrounding vegetation and proximity to the building. While the designs provided as part of the service indicate a BAL for which they are suitable, compliance with AS 3959-2009 is still required as part of the building approval process.

While there was an initial wave of interest in the Bushfires Homes Service, the OVGA has advised that there was limited take-up of the service and use of the service translated into only a small number of actual rebuilding projects. To expedite assistance to affected communities and to make use of a ready source of volunteers, the Bushfires Home Service was established by mid-2009. This, however, may have resulted in the minimal take up of the service, as many people were not ready to rebuild so soon after the bushfires.

Architectural contributors were willing to substantially adapt the designs beyond those offered as part of the initial free consultation. This work was either done pro bono, or for reduced fees. In other cases, contributors to the service assisted people with rebuilding, but not by using designs that were part of the Bushfires Home Service.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 55(b) has been satisfactorily implemented. The use of such a service in future may have to be reassessed in terms of the ability of people to take up a rebuilding service so soon after a major event where loss of homes (and lives) has been a critical factor.

55(c) Update practice notes and guidelines on AS 3959-2009

55(d) Prepare media material on AS3959-2009

A practice note on Building Controls for Bushfire Safety – Interim was issued by the Building Commission in August 2009. The practice note was issued as an interim practice note to enable future updates to be made as a result of implementation by the government of any of the recommendations made by the VBRC, any changes made to the building regulatory system or any future relevant changes to planning schemes made in the VPP.

The Building Commission has since drafted an Update to Practice Note 42 – Building Controls for Bushfire Safety. This Practice Note includes information on the interaction of the planning and building systems where a WMO applies. In addition, the Practice Note includes exclusions allowed under AS 3959-2009 when undertaking a BAL assessment and advice about alternative solutions. A copy of the updated Practice Note was provided to the BRCIM.

All practice notes prepared by the Building Commission were republished on 1 May 2011 following the release of the NCC Series which comprises the BCA Commercial and Residential Volumes (Volume One and Two including Volume One Appendices) and the Plumbing Code of Australia which forms Volume Three.

Practice Note 42 will continue to be updated as further recommendations of the VBRC are implemented. It will need to be updated to reflect changes to the planning and building regimes as a result of implementation of recommendations 37, 40 and 49. This will include:

- recommendation 37: new statewide mapping of bushfire risk and alignment of site assessment methods (adoption of the AS 3959-2009 BAL assessment process for all sites in bushfire prone areas and for WMO areas)

- recommendation 40: proposed changes to the WMO applicants kit

- recommendation 49: proposed changes to the “deemed-to-satisfy” provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ.
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The Building Commission provides numerous documents on its website (www.buildingcommission.com.au) in relation to AS 3959-2009. This includes publications, fact sheets, bulletins and guides with information on:

- building and renovating
- residential building standards and BAL
- private bushfire shelters
- retrofitting
- after a bushfire: a guide to the safe return to your property.

This information was available from the Building Commission’s website prior to December 2010.

The Building Amendment (Private Bushfire Shelter Construction) Interim Regulations 2010 will expire in September 2011 and additional material will be published to explain the application of AS 3959-2009 when these regulations are replaced. In addition, as amendments to AS 3959-2009 occur or the state continues to implement the VBRC recommendations, the Building Commission will continue to amend material on its website to reflect these changes.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 55(c) and (d) have been satisfactorily implemented. It is noted that guidance and other material on AS 3959-2009 will be updated on an ongoing basis when and if changes are made or there are changes as a result of the implementation of other VBRC recommendations.

**55(e) Implement information and training program on new bushfire planning provisions**

Discussions have commenced with Registered Training Organisations and a scope of work is currently being developed to implement information and training programs based on the new bushfire planning provisions as part of the Integrated Building and Planning Framework. These will be prepared in conjunction with the new provisions to be delivered after September 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes this is an ongoing action. The BRCIM will revisit action 55(e) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**55(f) University of Technology Sydney to conduct short course on Development and Building in Bushfire Prone Areas**

**55(g) Further three short courses planned for 2010-2011**

**55(h) Subsidise up to 90 places on short courses**

**55(i) Ongoing funding of $50K per annum for subsidised places**

The Centre for Local Government at UTS has developed and implemented a five-day program to enhance understanding and skills for assessing bushfire attack levels and controlling development and building in bushfire prone areas. The course, *Development and Building in Bushfire Prone Areas*, is aimed at building and development professionals such as planners, building surveyors, subdivision engineers, bushfire control personnel and architects.

The course content includes a mix of lectures, workshop sessions and a field trip with written assessments. The course provides the necessary understanding of the legal and planning frameworks to ensure participants are able to apply the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations 2006, BCA NCC Series, AS 3959-2009 and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. 
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Four courses have been run from 25-29 October 2010, 29 November-3 December 2010, 7-11 February 2011 and 9-13 May 2011 at the CFA Bangholme Campus, Victoria. An additional course will run from 21-25 November 2011.

The course is fully supported and endorsed by the Building Commission and the CFA. The UTS program is based on a program that has operated in New South Wales over the past decade but has been revised to incorporate the Victorian context and address the VBRC’s recommendations.

A Victorian Government subsidy of $995 is available to the first 90 eligible participants to enrol in each course. This subsidy is not available to government departments or agencies. Funding of $50,000 has been secured for 2010-11 to further support subsidised places on this short course. It is anticipated that there may be one-off project funding to enable further subsidies over the 2011-12 financial year.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 55(f), (g) and (h) have been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM notes that the short course continues to be held and that ongoing funding of subsidies is yet to be determined. The BRCIM will revisit action 55(i) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

55(j) Industry Seminars and continuing education

Industry and consumer seminars will continue to be held on an ongoing needs basis. A range of seminars were held by the Building Commission in April and May 2011. Further information is included in response to action 55(a).

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 55(j) has been satisfactorily implemented and notes that the Building Commission continues to offer seminars based on an as “needs basis”.

55(k) Development of bushfire planning and design course with tertiary institution

Discussions have commenced with Registered Training Organisations and a scope of work is currently being developed to implement information and training programs on any new bushfire planning provisions.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes that this is a long term action with the target date for the tertiary course scheduled for July 2012. The BRCIM will revisit action 55(k) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 56**

The State fund and commit to implementing a long-term program of prescribed burning based on an annual rolling target of 5 per cent minimum of public land.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56(a) Employ 700 seasonal firefighters</td>
<td>01/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(b) Draft Fire Operations Plans and release for public consultation. Review annually</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(c) Employ additional 170 permanent firefighters</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(d) Increased planned burning to 390,000 hectares</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>56(e) Increased planned burning to 385,000 hectares <em>This action is from the October 2010 Plan and is no longer applicable – superseded by action 56(d)</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(f) Identify changes required to effectively and efficiently achieve the target planned burn</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(g) Establish monitoring and risk management process that include increased community engagement and planned burn notification systems</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56(h) Maintain existing strategic fuel breaks</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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The current government agreed to an increased planned burning target of 390,000 hectares per year. The increase in planned burning is based on the VBRC’s recommendation of an annual rolling target of five per cent of public land that will reduce fuel hazards and the risk of bushfires affecting the community and the environment. Work toward this target has commenced with the burning of 200,000 hectares occurring in 2010-11.

To implement this commitment, DSE is instituting a staged approach to planned burning to take into consideration the new burning targets and new arrangements. DSE has advised that significant changes will be occurring over the next two years in relation to planned burning across the state.

**56(a) Employment of seasonal firefighters**

**56(c) Employ an additional 170 permanent firefighters**

The recruitment of seasonal Project Firefighters (PFFs) and permanent field services officers traditionally commences in mid-August with targeted recruitment in advertisements on internet job sites/university careers sites and through statewide publications and regional newspapers. In October 2010, a joint DSE/Parks Victoria recruitment campaign for the 2010-11 fire season commenced. All PFFs who worked in previous seasons and had satisfactory exit interviews were encouraged to reapply.

Information sessions on the recruitment process for 2010-11 were scheduled across the state to inform potential applicants of changes to the PFF program, including the introduction of National Police Record Checks. In line with a submission from the state, “Submissions of the State of Victoria on Arson and Deliberately Lit Bushfires”, as part of the VBRC hearings, DSE now undertakes criminal history checking for all new firefighting staff. All PFFs who commenced employment after 1 July 2010 and DSE staff who move into or are employed in operational fire roles after 1 July 2010 must undergo a National Police Record Check.

Around 700 PFFs were recruited across the state over the 2010-11 fire season. The table below sets out the number of PFFs as at January 2011, compared with May 2011.

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DSE workers at a planned burn
Photo: CFA Strategic Communications

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### Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>East Gippsland</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>South West</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of PFFs (Jan 11)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of PFFs (May 11)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Recruitment of PFFs is tailored to the fire seasons’ predictions and actual seasons’ weather forecast. For the 2010-11 season, due to the mild summer and wetter months preceding, the numbers were adjusted accordingly. During the January 2011 floods, a number of PFFs were redirected to work on flood response and recovery. DSE has advised staff spent almost 40,777 hours on flood response and recovery as a result of the January floods.

Permanent field services officers were also recruited to hold positions working in DSE and for Parks Victoria. The allocation of field services officers is determined by area allocation derived using a risk based model accounting for the increase in hectares to be burnt based on government objectives and resources associated with the complexity of the burn. Parks Victoria and DSE agreed to the employment of an additional 123 permanent field services officers over the 2010-11 fire season: 33 positions for Parks Victoria and 90 for DSE.

DSE currently employs 231 permanent field staff, with Parks Victoria employing 167 permanent field services staff. Staff required for planned burns can also be taken from the mobile workforce of the NEO and the PFF staff. The NEO partnership model draws upon additional personnel from DPI, DPCD, Melbourne Water and VicForests who are available across DSE’s regions for bushfire response.

In the October 2010 Plan, a commitment was made to employ an additional 170 firefighters. This figure was revised to 123 due to operational requirements over the relatively benign fire season in 2010-11 and this figure was reported accordingly in the Implementation Plan.

The BRCIM considers the PFF program is an invaluable part of DSE’s core business, as DSE has responsibility for preventing and suppressing bushfires in all of Victoria’s national parks, state forests and protected public land, across almost one-third of the state. The recruitment of additional permanent field service officers continues to complement the work undertaken by seasonal PFFs in the area of fire prevention as part of DSE’s planned burning program.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers actions 56(a) and (c) have been satisfactorily implemented. The BRCIM observes that the employment of PFFs and permanent field staff is part of an annual, ongoing activity within DSE and is adjusted according to conditions and operational requirements.

**Fire Operations Plans (FOPs)**

Each year, DSE prepares FOPs for Victoria’s public land, parks, forests and reserves. FOPs are rolling three year plans that detail all burns and works such as slashing, mowing and clearing activities to maintain existing firebreaks to be conducted in land and fire districts during the stated period.
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As part of the annual fire operations planning process, FOPs are reviewed and plans superseded when new draft plans have been reviewed and approved. All FOPs are developed in accordance with DSE’s Fire Operations Planning Manual 2.1 (2010), an internal DSE manual that provides standards, procedures and guidelines for the planning of planned burns and non-burn fuel management works. All processes related to the development of FOPs are covered under the manual including development, approval, distribution, publication and amendment of FOPs. In addition to the Manual, all FOPs must be undertaken in accordance with relevant statutory requirements, the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land 2006 (the Code) and procedural instructions and guidelines.17

FOPs must contain:

• a three year forward program comprising a schedule and maps for fuel reduction and ecological burning and any new preparedness works planned for the immediate 12 month budget period
• a detailed schedule of prevention and preparedness works planned for the immediate 12 month budget period.

FOPs do not contain activities that may be undertaken under other planning processes such as logging, regeneration burns, roadside burns or other works. Activities such as the construction of fuel breaks, roads, infrastructure that involve permanent vegetation removal require approval through other processes.

FOPs are prepared by DSE and Parks Victoria staff in consultation with other relevant agencies and stakeholders including CFA Districts, municipal shires, community groups, apiarists, plantation companies, the wine industry, other interested landholders and indigenous representatives. They are a useful medium to inform the public of fire prevention activities planned for the next three years.

All FOPs are available for download from the DSE website (www.dse.vic.gov.au).

56(b) Draft Fire Operations Plans (FOPs) and release for public consultation. Review annually

The state committed to make Fire Operation Plans (FOPs) for July 2010 to June 2013 available for public comment during August 2010 and these were all approved in October 2010. All FOPs are available for download from the DSE website (www.dse.vic.gov.au).

Advertisements outlining the consultation process for the FOPs were placed in the Melbourne Herald Sun and regional papers such as the Maldon Times, McIvor Times, Echuca Herald and Bendigo Weekly in August 2010. Public meetings were held across the state allowing local communities to view and provide, where relevant, comments on the FOPs.

Post February 2009 a number of issues arose regarding perceived increases in asset protection burning and rezoning. Other issues raised by stakeholders during the FOP consultation period were reviewed and where appropriate changes made to the FOP. These changes included amendments to the number of burns scheduled, removal of proposed burns or boundaries for the burns altered. All planned operations are referenced against DSE’s existing and verified flora and fauna databases to check for the presence of rare and threatened species and high conservation significance in ecological vegetation classes (the basic mapping units used for biodiversity planning and conservation assessment at landscape, regional and broader scales in Victoria).

17 The Code is to be amended as part of action 59(a) and a new version will be in place by June 2012 (see recommendation 59).
FOP approval is for 12 months and as FOP approval does not occur until late September or early October, burning activities may commence prior to 30 September, provided the burns and works have appeared in an approved FOP from the previous year.

Copies of all FOPs for each land and fire district were provided to the BRCIM as evidence.

DSE has advised that preparation of the 2011-12 to 2013-14 FOPs has commenced. Area targets for the 2011-12 FOP are undetermined at 1 June 2011, as funding for delivery of the program is unknown.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 56(b) has been satisfactorily implemented. It should be noted that the development of FOPs is an ongoing activity and FOPs continue to be reviewed annually as part of DSE’s normal business activities.

**56(d) Increased planned burning to 390,000 hectares**

The government has committed to increase the annual planned burning target to 390,000 hectares. The target for 2010-11 was 200,000 hectares. DSE has advised that as at 30 May 2011, 187,955 hectares had been treated. This target is a 30 per cent increase on the average annual achievement over the past four years and is the largest burning amount achieved in 20 years. The increase was achieved through the recruitment of additional resources (refer to actions 56(a) and (c)), an increase in the contribution from existing trained personnel in DSE and Parks Victoria and maximising the burning opportunities available throughout the year (taking into account seasonal variations).

DSE has advised the current planning targets for the planned burning program for the next three years are:

- Year 1: 2011-12 225,000 hectares
- Year 2: 2012-13 290,000 hectares
- Year 3: 2013-14 390,000 hectares

**Finding:** The BRCIM is satisfied with the progress DSE has made in meeting its revised planned burning target of 390,000 hectares. Planned burning targets are dependent, however, on favourable weather and burning conditions. DSE includes planned burning requirements in the development of FOPs across the state (refer to action 56(b)).

The BRCIM will continue to monitor the issue of planned burning and the state’s revised targets over 2011-12 and intends to provide further analysis and revisit action 56(d) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**56(e) Increased planned burning to 385,000 hectares**

**Finding:** This implementation action is no longer applicable as it has been superseded by action 56(d).

**56(f) Identify changes required to effectively and efficiently achieve the target planned burn**

**Finding:** This action is linked to action 56(d). The BRCIM will continue to monitor the issue of planned burning and the state’s revised targets over 2011-12 and intends to provide further analysis and revisit action 56(f) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
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56(g) Establish monitoring and risk management process that include increased community engagement and planned burn notification systems

As part of increasing its community engagement process, DSE has made improvements to the way planned burns are communicated. During 2011, DSE embarked on an extensive community information campaign on planned burning.

From January to June 2011, DSE used a range of external communications to promote awareness of planned burns. This included using existing media as part of the FireReady Advertising (refer to recommendation 2) such as:

- television advertising (30 second advertisements running five nights a week for a month, prior to the weather on WIN TV)
- billboards (used in 25 key high usage regional roadside positions for a month including school holidays and over Easter. Locations included Princes Highway, Hume Highway and Great Ocean Road)
- press advertising
- online advertising (examples given of Google sidebar ads, advertising in the Weekly Times).

In addition, DSE used brochures, posters and social media (such as Youtube video, twitter updates, facebook updates) to further communicate information on planned burns. Around 20,000 temporary signs are available to be erected at short notice in locations where burning is occurring or has happened. Signs will usually be erected in regularly visited areas (for example, walking tracks and forest tracks).

As part of the campaign, the community is also encouraged where possible to contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (telephone: 1800 240 667) or visit the DSE website (www.dse.vic.gov.au) for further information. A dedicated page on the DSE website provides a summary of planned burns on public land (burns on private land are not recorded) including an interactive map of Victoria outlining the region, district and location of the planned burn and the status of planned burns, both current and planned within the next seven to 10 days.

During the period of January to July 2011, almost 800 notifications (some multiple notifications of the same burn) were provided to the VBIL and to media.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes DSE’s improvements to current communications campaigns to increase and promote community awareness of planned burns. DSE will continue to provide information to the community on planned burns and provide adequate and ongoing notifications of such burns. The BRCIM notes that this is an ongoing action and will revisit action 56(g) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

56(h) Maintain existing strategic fuel breaks

The state committed as part of the October 2010 Plan to continue to maintain existing strategic fuel breaks for key state assets such as water supplies. The state advised in the Implementation Plan that DSE has constructed strategic fuel breaks around...
CHAPTER 7.1

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Melbourne water catchments and throughout the Otways to protect communities from the effects of bushfire.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 56(h) has been satisfactorily implemented while noting that maintaining strategic fuel breaks is part of DSE’s annual planned clearing and burning program.

In addition to evidence provided in response to the implementation of recommendation 56, the BRCIM attended a demonstration of DSE’s fuel reduction program in the Otways in March 2011. As part of its commitment to improving its planned burning program, DSE has developed a project on the future of fire management. The DSE project has been developed in partnership with Parks Victoria, the CFA and local government, the Surf Coast and Colac-Otway Shires and represents a coordinated strategic approach to protecting the vulnerable coastal communities in the Otways.

A presentation by DSE and Parks Victoria was provided to the BRCIM in May 2011. Details of the project, ‘Approaches to Future Fire Management – A case study of risk based planning and action from the Otway-Surf Coast’, are outlined in the following case study.

### Approaches to Future Fire Management - risk based planning and action from the Otway-Surf Coast

Recommendation 56 of the VBRC Final Report represents a substantial increase in planned burning on public land. The government in accepting this recommendation committed to increasing the amount of planned burning across the public land of Victoria to 390,000 hectares per annum by 2015. The VBRC stated that the approach must be based on an explicit risk analysis model (refer to recommendation 59) that also takes into account effects on biodiversity (refer to recommendation 58).

The challenge is to reduce bushfire risk to life and property while also maintaining a healthy environment.

DSE developed the “Future Fire Management Project” to deliver these outcomes. This project assists fire managers to work with communities to choose the best mix of treatments to both protect communities and sustain natural biodiversity and ecosystem resources, such as carbon and water. It is based on the best understanding of bushfire risk, provides the best estimate of potential impacts of fire (possible outcomes), focuses on how well goals are achieved and will be continuously reviewed and improved through research and monitoring.

Since 2006 an active partnership between DSE, Parks Victoria, CFA and local government, particularly Surf Coast Shire and Colac-Otway Shire, has developed a coordinated strategic approach to protecting the vulnerable coastal communities in the Otways. Many of these communities were devastated during the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires. A bushfire management planning process (the Future Fire Management Project Otways Pilot Study) commenced in the Otways in 2010. It is supported by a stakeholder reference group and aims to plan across both public and private land.

Community consultation assisted in identifying locally important social, economic and environmental values. The planning then set objectives considering these values. Using Phoenix RapidFire, a computer based tool that simulates the growth of bushfire under set
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conditions, it is possible to show partners and the community what is likely to happen in a bushfire under given conditions but most importantly, what beneficial effects arise from treatments like burning on the spread of a bushfire. When linked with knowledge of how natural forests respond to fire, it also enables an assessment of the cost-benefits of many fires spread over a long period of time (fire regimes). This allows more informed and transparent decisions. This tool and ways of using it to support planning, have been developed by Melbourne University, the Bushfire CRC, DSE and Parks Victoria.

As a part of this process, the following long term fire management options were assessed for the Otways Pilot Study:

- fire regimes that focus mostly on protecting built assets
- fire regimes that work tightly within ecologic needs
- several combinations of the above.

These fire regimes were then evaluated for their impact on:

- spread, intensity and damage potential on communities of severe bushfires spreading under extreme fire conditions
- forest health (biodiversity and resilience)
- water quality and supply.

Importantly, the Pilot Study developed and evaluated fire regimes as they apply across the entire landscape, both public (parks and forests) and private land. This is absolutely critical to the effectiveness of bushfire management, as bushfires do not respect land boundaries and there is approximately 45,000 hectares of private bushland in the Otways. An integrated approach to managing fuels and fire regimes across both public and private land is essential to better managing bushfire.

The Pilot Study has produced information that is of great value to Otways bushfire managers. Numerous fires were run by simulation over the Otways landscape. The protection and ecological and water impacts provided by various combinations of burns was estimated for many fire scenarios. These simulations enable comparative assessment of how planned fire can reduce the chance of fire starting, slow the rate and ferocity of their spread and reduce their impact on communities and the resources (such as water) and value (such as healthy forests). Fire managers can now measure the level of risk reduction achieved by planned burning and establishment of fuel breaks, including the importance of the relationship between fuel management on both public and private land.

Figure 1 shows how the landscape can be assessed in terms of the most important areas to manage the risk of fire starting, spreading and causing damage – the example here focuses on ignitions.

The orange and red areas represent the areas where fires have the highest potential to damage the most residential properties in the Otways under certain fire danger conditions.

Regardless of how extensively planned burning and building fuel breaks are conducted, bushfire
risk can never be totally eliminated from the Victorian landscape. Initial modelling and planning using future fire management techniques in the Pilot Study indicates that, even with burning the maximum area possible, it is not feasible to reduce risk to communities by much more than 50 per cent to 60 per cent. It shows that communities must then apply other mechanisms such as clearing around homes, getting to know neighbours, establishing network groups such as community fire guard and fire strategic conversations and developing individual and community bushfire plans to further reduce risk. This then becomes a true expression of working together to reduce bushfire risk - an example of “shared responsibility”.

Simulations have revealed the parts of the Otways where the most damaging bushfires may start, spread and have significant impacts on communities and water catchments. Although this information is still being refined and evaluated, it already provides critical information for Otway fire managers. Burns and other prevention works can be located with confidence and be shown to substantially reduce risk of bushfire to communities. Review, evaluation and adaptation through the incorporation of new information from research, monitoring and working with communities is fundamental to the ultimate success of fire management planning statewide.

The Otways Pilot Study has not just focussed on planning future fire regimes. It has practically informed the delivery of the current burn program with approximately 18,000 hectares effectively fuel reduced over the past three years. Modelled risk reduction in the Otways has provided evidence of the need for the escalation of the DSE and Parks Victoria planned burn program and has demonstrated how fire managers can work more transparently and cooperatively with communities to improve bushfire management outcomes for reducing bushfire risk to local communities.

DSE and Parks Victoria conducted a simulation of the 1983 Ash Wednesday fire in the Otway Surf Coast region to better understand and demonstrate the impact of fuel reduction burning on fire extent and severity and the community impact.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 are images from this simulation and represent the spread of fire under near worst case conditions.

Figure 2 shows the projected spread of the fire under conditions similar to those on Ash Wednesday in 1983, without any prior planned burning and fuel management. The brighter orange and red areas indicate higher flame heights and potential to cause damage.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

Figure 3 shows the actual recorded fire history of the area between 2000 and the end of 2010. The blue areas have been treated with planned fire, while the red areas represent areas that have experienced unplanned fire during this period.

Figure 4 demonstrates how the burning outlined in figure 3 is expected to break up and reduce the severity of the fire run in figure 2. The planned burn footprints are marked by the blue lines, and the fire often doesn’t spread through these areas, or spreads more slowly and less intensely through and out of them.

As of 2011, DSE and Parks Victoria have implemented and improved on strategies evaluated using this approach.

Much work remains to be done with the process of better understanding bushfire risk, the role of fire in the environment and working together to find the best ways to manage fire in the environment is an ongoing process. This work will be further developed in the Otways and is also planned for other parts of the high bushfire risk landscape, including the Yarra Valley, Dandenong Ranges and Central Highlands. As the Future Fire Management Project is refined over the next few years, this critical work has the potential to support more explicit and transparent risk based decision making and improve integrated bushfire management planning statewide.

The BRCIM considers that this approach significantly contributes to the spirit of the VBRC Final Report, with its emphasis on protecting human life by reflecting our shared responsibility for bushfire safety. The BRCIM encourages the ongoing development and further adoption of this approach statewide as a matter of priority.

**RECOMMENDATION 57**

The DSE report annually on prescribed burning outcomes in a manner that meets public accountability objectives, including publishing details of targets, area burnt, funds expended on the program, and impacts on biodiversity.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57(a) Reporting outcomes of planned burning</td>
<td>30/10/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57(b) Develop additional measures to ensure planned burn outcomes are captured and reported</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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CHAPTER 7.1

Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

57(a) Reporting outcomes of planned burning

DSE is currently developing a Planned Burning Performance Management Framework to assist with the reporting of outcomes from planned burns.

This framework consists of a collection of measures and indicators used to assess annual performance, the efficiency of delivery and effectiveness of actions undertaken to reduce risks to life, property and biodiversity values. The measures and indicators are part of a scorecard which will enable reporting of outputs and outcomes at defined frequencies (ie. weekly, monthly, seasonally or annually).

The framework is currently a conceptual draft model and is still to be approved by DSE management. A number of elements of the framework, including the measures and indicators are under internal review.

A copy of the draft framework was provided to the BRCIM for review. The BRCIM notes that the framework is well advanced and once finalised will provide DSE with a more robust mechanism for reporting outcomes of planned burning. The framework is closely integrated with DSE’s existing databases and data sources.

The date for completion of this implementation action was agreed with DSE as part of discussions following the release of the October 2010 Plan. The BRCIM will report on the framework once it is finalised and assess its efficacy as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 57(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

57(b) Develop additional measures to ensure planned burn outcomes are captured and reported

DSE has advised that it will continue to report against planned burning measures in its Annual Report. This action is closely aligned with implementation action 57(a) and the development of measures as part of the Planned Burning Performance Management Framework.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit this action 57(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 58

The DSE significantly upgrade its program of long-term data collection to monitor and model the effects of its prescribed burning programs and of bushfires on biodiversity in Victoria.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58(a) Commence a program of enhanced biodiversity monitoring</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

58(a) Commence a program of enhanced biodiversity monitoring

DSE has commenced a program of enhanced biodiversity monitoring over the next four years. Project HawkEye – Biodiversity monitoring for improved fire management (HawkEye) commenced in October 2010 and supports DSE’s existing biodiversity monitoring activities, and links to and informs DSE’s planned burning program. HawkEye will build on information currently obtained as part of DSE’s Landscape Mosaic Burning research projects.

The key objective of HawkEye is to evaluate scientifically the increase in the planned burning program. Data gathered as part of the project will contribute to the ongoing refinement of adaptive fire management frameworks and assist in improving the current knowledge of fire ecology and biodiversity. The project will have a number of key benefits for the state including:

- improving fire ecology assessment and fire management planning systems and processes to benefit future fire management activities
- providing ongoing monitoring advice to strategically inform the planned burning program.

To assist with the project DSE engaged a Senior Scientist in May 2011. DSE has been working on establishing key components of the project over 2010-11 with monitoring sites to be established across 215,000 hectares in Victoria in June 2011. The BRCIM has sighted a copy of the approved project implementation plan for HawkEye and has been given additional evidence supporting the project.

Work has commenced on a number of sub-projects to enable the monitoring of biodiversity and fire in the Otways, Mallee forests and Gippsland and north east. These projects will be undertaken through various arrangements DSE is preparing with institutions such as Melbourne, LaTrobe and Deakin Universities and the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research.

HawkEye will not include the monitoring of fire on private land.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 58(a) has been satisfactorily implemented as the biodiversity monitoring program has commenced. The BRCIM looks forward to receiving further information on the progress of HawkEye from DSE over 2011-12 and will report on progress as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land

The Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land (the Code) provides a framework for fire management procedures and practice on all public land in Victoria, with appropriate links to private land. The Code lays down minimum statewide standards for fire management on public land and compliance with the Code is mandatory for all fire related activities on public land.
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The Code was developed in accordance with Part 5 of the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 (CFL Act). Part 5 of the CFL Act gives the Minister for Environment and Climate Change the power to make a Code of Practice and sets out the relevant procedures for amending and varying a Code and subsequently tabling the Code. Amendments to the Code under Part 5 require a mandatory public consultation period of 60 days.

The Code was last reviewed in 2005-06 and the current version is available from the DSE website at www.dse.vic.gov.au.

RECOMMENDATION 59

The Department of Sustainability and Environment amend the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land in order to achieve the following:

59.1 provide a clear statement of objectives, expressed as measurable outcomes
59.2 include an explicit risk-analysis model for more objective and transparent resolution of competing objectives, where human life is the highest priority
59.3 specify the characteristics of fire management zones - including burn size, percentage area burnt within the prescribed burn, and residual fuel loading
59.4 adopt the use of the term ‘bushfire’ rather than ‘wildfire’.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<td>59(a) Amend the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59(b) Amend operational manuals and guides and advise all staff</td>
<td>30/06/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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PROGRESS

59(a) Amend the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land

DSE has committed to implementing two actions under recommendation 59 by June 2012. This includes amending the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land (the Code) (action 59(a)) and subsequently amending all operational manuals and guides and advising staff of proposed changes (action 59(b)).

DSE has commenced work on reviewing the Code. The BRCIM has sighted a copy of DSE’s approved project implementation plan which sets out the proposed scope of review. In reviewing the Code, DSE will identify information within the Code that is duplicated within other operational documents and assess whether information currently in the Code should exist in other operational documents. The Code will also be reviewed to ensure that it aligns with the responsibilities of the FSC.

As part of the review of the Code, DSE will engage with internal and external stakeholders including fire management experts, the CFA, FSC, Parks Victoria and representatives from, but limited to, the wine industry, forest industries, Victorian Farmers Federation and environment groups.
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Consultation with stakeholders commenced in April 2011 with a draft Code scheduled for a 60 day public consultation period (as required under the (the CFL Act)) by October 2011. A number of roundtable meetings and workshops are scheduled to be held across the state to discuss the scope of the review and seek stakeholder views. The state has committed to table the revised Code in Parliament by June 2012.

Finding: The BRCIM is satisfied that the review of the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land is on schedule and will be completed by June 2012. The BRCIM will revisit action 59(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

59(b) Amend operational manuals and guides and advise all staff

Once the Code is revised, DSE intends to amend all of its operational manuals and guides and provide relevant advice to all staff of the proposed changes.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit action 59(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 60

The State amend the exemptions in clause 52.17-6 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure that the provisions allow for a broad range of roadside works capable of reducing fire risk and provide specifically for a new exemption where the purpose of the works is to reduce bushfire risk.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>60(a) Identify roadside vegetation management requirements</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60(b) Facilitate roadside vegetation management without a planning permit (exemption) – amend VPP as appropriate</td>
<td>30/09/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60(c) Consult widely with councils, Vic Roads and MAV through the Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group (DSE/LGNV Reference Group) – see 41(b)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60(d) Ongoing awareness and training for staff in roadside vegetation management</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

PROGRESS

60(a) Identify roadside vegetation management requirements

DSE is working with municipal councils, the DSE/LGNV Reference Group and VicRoads to identify vegetation management requirements on roadsides to reduce bushfire risk. The DSE/LGNV Reference Group is still considering options for roadside vegetation management requirements. The BRCIM has been provided with copies of all the minutes from the DSE/LGNV Reference Group’s meetings and notes the ongoing discussions in relation to this issue. For further information on the DSE/LGNV Reference Group please refer to recommendation 41 (action 41(b)).

Further advice will be provided to the BRCIM, with the DSE/LGNV Reference Group scheduled to next meet in July 2011. It should be noted that this action is closely linked to actions under recommendation 60 and 61.
Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress of action 60(a) in relation to roadside vegetation management requirements across Victoria. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

60(b) Facilitate roadside vegetation management without a planning permit (exemption) – amend VPP as appropriate

Clause 52.17-6 of the VPP currently provides that a permit is not required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation to the minimum extent necessary if a number of conditions are met. This includes if the native vegetation is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to maintain the safe and efficient function of an existing public road managed by a responsible authority defined under the Roads Management Act 2004.

Amendments are currently being developed to the VPP to simplify the process by which road managers seek to rely on the exemption under clause 52.17-6. This will also take into consideration obligations imposed on road managers under section 43 of the CFA Act and allay community concerns regarding bushfire risks on the state’s roadsides.

The DSE/LGNV Reference Group is currently considering the exemptions. The BRCIM has been provided with copies of all of the minutes from the DSE/LGNV Reference Group’s meetings and notes the ongoing discussions in relation to this issue. Development of the exemption is to be completed by July 2011, however, this may depend on the finalisation of the Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines (refer to recommendation 62).

The amendments to the VPP are scheduled for completion in September 2011 as part of the state’s Integrated Planning and Building Framework.

Finding: The BRCIM notes the progress in relation to action 60(b) and will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

60(c) Consult widely with councils, Vic Roads and MAV through the Local Government Native Vegetation Reference Group

DSE continues to consult with the DSE/LGNV Reference Group in relation to roadside vegetation management issues. The BRCIM has been provided with copies of all the minutes from the DSE/LGNV Reference Group’s meetings and notes the ongoing discussions in relation to this issue. For further information on the DSE/LGNV Reference Group please refer to recommendation 41 (action 41(b)).

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 60(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

60(d) Ongoing awareness and training for staff in roadside vegetation management

DSE and MAV are currently developing guidelines for assessing roadside fire risk-reduction works which are due for completion in August 2011. Following the completion of these guidelines, DSE has advised that statewide training of staff from the relevant road authorities (municipalities and VicRoads) and fire agencies involved in the preparation of municipal fire prevention plans will occur. These guidelines will assist with the operation of the new exemption. It is envisaged that these guidelines will be an incorporated document in the VPP.

DSE will provide further details following the release of these guidelines.

Finding: The BRCIM notes that progress is continuing in relation to awareness and training on changes to roadside vegetation management but is dependent on the completion of amendments to the VPP. The BRCIM will revisit action 60(d) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 61**

The State amend the exemptions in clause 52.17-6 of the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure that the provisions allow for a broad range of roadside works capable of reducing fire risk and provide specifically for a new exemption where the purpose of the works is to reduce bushfire risk.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61(a) Identify specific guidance needs and regulatory barriers to undertake roadside vegetation management for bushfire consultation (via LGNV Reference Group and road managers)</td>
<td>July 2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61(b) Prepare guidance and work toward resolution of regulatory impediments on roadside vegetation management</td>
<td>Sep 2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61(c) Where regulatory impediments are identified that cannot be resolved through the delivery of recommendation 60 or guidance as noted above legislative amendments will be considered</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**PROGRESS**

**61(a) Identify specific guidance needs and regulatory barriers to undertake roadside vegetation management for bushfire consultation (via LGNV Reference Group and road managers)**

As outlined in the Implementation Plan, this work is being done as part of action 60(a). This work will be completed by July 2011.

**Finding:** The date for implementation of action 61(a) is July 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this action as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**61(b) Prepare guidance and work toward resolution of regulatory impediments on roadside vegetation management**

This action is linked to work which is currently being developed in response to recommendation 60.

**Finding:** Further work in relation to this action is required but is reliant on the progress of actions under recommendation 60. The BRCIM will revisit action 61(b) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**61(c) Where regulatory impediments are identified that cannot be resolved through the delivery of recommendation 60 or guidance as noted above legislative amendments will be considered**

**Finding:** The BRCIM will revisit action 61(c) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
CHAPTER 7.1

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Commonwealth Response

The Commonwealth, in its response to the VBRC Final Report, advised that it supported the provision of clear guidance on the application of relevant environment legislation. The Commonwealth will ensure that adequate guidance is available on where the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* might apply to bushfire prevention and management activities such as roadside clearing.

The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update on recommendation 61:

*Public guidelines on Bushfire Management and National Environment Law have been completed and published which provide guidance on the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and its role in regulating bushfire management activities carried out by state and territory governments, local councils, other authorities such as fire and emergency services, and individuals.*

*The guidance includes information relevant to both bushfire prevention and suppression activities. The guidelines are published on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website.*

*Presentations and information sessions are continuing throughout regional Victoria and in other states.*

RECOMMENDATION 62

VicRoads implement a systematic statewide program of bushfire risk assessment for all roads for which it is responsible, to ensure conformity with the obligations in s. 43 of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* and with the objectives expressed in the VicRoads 1985 Code of Practice.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>62(a) Complete review of roadside management strategy</td>
<td>31/07/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(b) Establish a working group to develop roadside fire risk assessment guidelines</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(c) Develop a preliminary program of priority roadside fire management activities</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(d) Revise roadside management of 1985 Code of Practice to ensure compliance with section 43 of the CFA Act</td>
<td>31/12/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(e) Review contracts for roadside slashing and mowing</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(f) Produce interim Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines for 2010 season</td>
<td>31/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
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18 Refer to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website at www.environment.gov.au.
19 Previous due date 31/12/2010.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>62(g) Evaluate Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines</td>
<td>Autumn 2011²⁰</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(h) Commence road bushfire risk assessment management program</td>
<td>30/06/2011²¹</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(i) Undertake roadside management treatments identified through the Integrated Fire Management Plan (ongoing annual)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>See 62(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(j) Review all road management plans and roadside conservation management plans</td>
<td>30/06/2013</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62(k) Support CFA as requested with traffic management during fuel reduction burns on arterial roads (ongoing annual)</td>
<td>30/06/2011</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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**PROGRESS**

VicRoads is responsible for over 22,000 kilometres of freeway, highway and other significant arterial roads. As part of the state’s commitment to implement recommendation 62, VicRoads has undertaken to review its roadside management strategies, management activities, risk assessment guidelines and roadside management plans in a comprehensive approach to revise bushfire risk assessment programs for roadways across the VicRoads managed roads in the state.

**62(a) Complete review of roadside management strategy**

VicRoads commenced reviewing its Roadside Management Strategy in late 2010. This publicly available document had not been updated since 2002 despite subsequent amendments to the Road Management Act 2004. A draft strategy, the Roadside Management – A balanced approach: Summary of Victoria’s Roadside Management Strategy 2010 was completed in December 2010. The Roadside Management Strategy provides clear and consistent objectives for the management of Victoria’s roadside areas. It aims to guide roadside management in consultation with the local community to provide a balanced approach to enhancing transport safety, efficiency and access, protecting environmental and cultural heritage, managing fire risk and preserving and enhancing roadside amenities.

The state in the October 2010 Plan agreed to complete a draft strategy by December 2010. The BRCIM received copies of the draft strategy in December and April 2011. VicRoads has advised that the final draft was presented to the VicRoads Corporate Management Group for approval in April 2011. The Roadside Management Strategy has received in principle approval pending some additional changes which will be completed by July 2011. A copy of the Roadside Management Strategy has been provided to MAV for comment prior to finalisation.

**Finding:** The Roadside Management Strategy will be publicly released when it is finalised in July 2011. The BRCIM notes that the Roadside Management Strategy has been revised in conjunction with other activities such as the review of the Fire Management Code of Practice and the Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines (the RBRA Guidelines) (refer to actions 62(b), (d) and (g)). The BRCIM will revisit action 62(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

²⁰ Previous due date 31/03/2011.
²¹ Previous due date 30/11/2011.
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62(b) Establish a working group to develop roadside fire risk assessment guidelines

A VicRoads cross-departmental Working Group, the Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines Project Team, was set up to develop the interim RBRA Guidelines and develop a suitable roadside fire risk assessment tool. The Working Group is chaired by VicRoads and consists of representatives from the State Fire Management Committee, MAV, DSE, the CFA and Victoria Police and has met on numerous occasions throughout 2011.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 62(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

62(c) Develop a preliminary program of priority roadside fire management activities

VicRoads provided the BRCIM with a copy of its preliminary program of roadside activities for 2010-11. This program identifies a number of high priority activities in each of its regions across Victoria. Works are carried out before and during the fire season (depending on weather) with additional works scheduled for other times. Roadside treatment planned activities over 2010-11 included:

- trimming of vegetation near powerlines
- inspection of plantation vegetation under powerlines on arterial roads
- grass slashing and mowing on arterial roads
- removal of fire damaged and dead trees
- creation of strategic fire breaks
- training of regional emergency management staff.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 62(c) has been satisfactorily implemented.

62(d) Revise roadside management of 1985 Code of Practice to ensure compliance with section 43 of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Section 43 of the CFA Act requires VicRoads to take all practical steps to prevent and minimise the danger of the spread of fires on, and from, any road under its management and expend funds on fire prevention and suppression on roads.

VicRoads has recently revised its 1985 Code of Practice: Fire Prevention on Declared Road Reserves in Rural Areas (1985 Code) to incorporate the provisions of section 43 of the CFA Act. Following its revision, the 1985 Code has been incorporated into the VicRoads Fire Management Program Guidelines (the VicRoads Guidelines). The VicRoads Guidelines provide guidance on VicRoads’ responsibilities and expectations related to fire risk management and electric line clearance works. They will enable VicRoads regions to identify, assess and monitor sites of significant fire risk on road sides.

The VicRoads Guidelines support the CFA Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines and assist in informing municipal fire prevention planning and regional integrated fire management planning processes to identify fire risks, appropriate treatment options and responsibilities for treating roadside risks. The CFA is currently revising their guidelines in line with work currently being undertaken by VicRoads.
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The VicRoads Guidelines replace the 1985 Code and any previous asset management guidelines released by VicRoads in relation to fire risk and electric line clearance.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 62(d) has been satisfactorily implemented noting that the CFA is to review the CFA Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines in light of changes occurring in relation to roadside management requirements as part of implementing recommendations 60, 61 and 62.

62(e) Review contracts for roadside slashing and mowing

All contractual work undertaken on VicRoads assets (including freeways, highways and other significant arterial roads) such as slashing and mowing must comply with requirements outlined in the VicRoads’ Standard Specifications (the Specifications). Section 752 of the Specifications, *Routine Roadside Maintenance – Vegetation*, outlines the standards of performance required for routine maintenance of vegetation on roadsides. The section also sets out details of inspection, emergency response and record requirements.

Section 752 of the Specifications was revised and amended to reflect specific fire management activities such as grass cutting for strategic fire breaks. The Specifications now reflect changes to the VicRoads Guidelines as discussed under action 62(d).

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 62(e) has been satisfactorily implemented but notes that VicRoads continues to review the Specifications on an ongoing basis.

62(f) Produce interim Road Bushfire Risk Assessment Guidelines for 2010 season

The state committed to develop interim road bushfire risk assessment guidelines (the Interim RBRA Guidelines) by December 2010. The Interim RBRA Guidelines utilise a number of risk assessment processes specific to fire safety including:

- prevention and reducing the risk of fires on roadsides
- reducing the risk of spread of fire from the road reserve
- managing the safety of road users
- identifying mitigation treatments for roads designated as control lines or strategic fire breaks identified by the fire services.

As part of the Interim RBRA Guidelines, a Road Bushfire Risk Assessment tool was developed to assess the risks of fires starting on a road and spreading. The tool assesses the risk of a fire starting on a road, the likelihood of spread beyond the road reserve, the consequence of fire on the road reserve and the fire spread into the broader landscape. The output of this risk assessment will include a priorities list of roads classified into low risk (the level of bushfire risk does not warrant specific bushfire mitigation works), moderate risk (roads will receive standard treatments as part of a standard maintenance program) and high risk (roads require additional detailed assessment and possibly additional fire risk mitigation treatments).

The Risk Assessment Tool will be incorporated into the Interim RBRA Guidelines. A copy of the draft Interim RBRA Guidelines was submitted to the BRCIM in February 2011.

**Finding:** The BRCIM considers action 62(f) has been satisfactorily implemented but notes that further work on the Interim RBRA Guidelines has occurred with trials part of an evaluation process for the Interim RBRA Guidelines (as outlined in action 62(g)).
62(g) Evaluate road bushfire risk assessment guidelines
Following the development of the RBRA Guidelines it was agreed that a trial be conducted to test the RBRA Guidelines in the field to ensure they accurately reflect risks at the regional and municipal levels and provide guidance in prioritising the road network in regards to bushfire risk.

A trial of the Interim RBRA Guidelines was due to commence in the VicRoads Grampians Region over the 2010-11 fire season but due to floods in the region and VicRoads’ commitments to undertake repairs, the trial was cancelled and rescheduled for April and May 2011 in the VicRoads Eastern and Metro South East Regions. The trials were conducted using the Yarra Ranges Shire as the test municipal boundary and the East Gippsland Shire footprint.

The trials have been completed and a report on the trials has been prepared. The RBRA Guidelines and the risk assessment tool will be presented to the State Fire Management Committee Executive Meeting in July 2011. The BRCIM is aware that the date the state originally committed to in the October 2010 Plan was early 2011. Due to the late commencement of trials to evaluate the RBRA Guidelines this date has been revised to mid-2011 in the Implementation Plan. The BRCIM will confirm the date for completion as part of discussions with VicRoads post the tabling of the Progress Report.

Finding: The RBRA Guidelines and risk assessment tool are on track for completion at the end of July 2011 with the BRCIM noting they are to be presented to the State Fire Management Committee. The BRCIM will revisit action 62(g) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

62(h) Commence road bushfire risk assessment management program
The roadside fire risk assessment management program was to commence in November 2010. VicRoads has advised that it has not commenced this program due to reliance on the completion of the RBRA Guidelines.

As the RBRA Guidelines are yet to be finalised (refer to action 62(g)) this action is incomplete. The BRCIM will confirm details of the program including a revised completion date as part of discussions with VicRoads post the tabling of the Progress Report.

Findings: The BRCIM notes that this action has been delayed and is awaiting the finalisation of the RBRA Guidelines. The BRCIM will revisit this action 62(h) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

62(i) Undertake roadside management treatments identified through the Integrated Fire Management Plan
Finding: Implementation action 62(i) is no longer applicable and is part of action 62(c).

62(j) Review all road management plans and roadside conservation management plans
VicRoads established an internal working group in late 2010 to specifically address this issue and undertake a strategic review of all roadside management documents such as guidelines and processes. The task of the group is to rationalise the number of documents on roadside management that currently exist to simplify and clarify information.

A number of workshops have been held to review VicRoads’ road management plans and roadside conservation management plans. VicRoads provided the BRCIM with detailed notes of the workshops, which include an outline of issues discussed. The timeframe for completion of this review is 2013 and the working group will continue to meet throughout 2011.
Finding: The BRCIM notes that work is underway by VicRoads in reviewing all road management and roadside conservation plans. This large scale action is long term and will not be completed until 2013. VicRoads will give priority to the review of roadside management plans in high fire risk areas. The BRCIM will revisit action 62(j) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

62(k) Support CFA as requested with traffic management during fuel reduction burns on arterial roads (ongoing annual)

VicRoads supports and provides assistance to the CFA during fuel reduction burns on arterial roads when requested to do so. This occurs on an annual, ongoing basis.

VicRoads provided evidence of its support for traffic management assistance for a number of CFA fuel reduction burns along the Sunraysia Highway, Northern Grampians Road and the Western Highway during late 2010. Due to a relatively wet summer, the number of roadside burns has been significantly less than in previous years as roadside fuel loads have been too green for burning.

Finding: This action occurs on an annual, ongoing basis, however, the BRCIM notes that it is dependent on weather conditions and fuel loads. There is evidence that VicRoads continues to support the CFA where required. The BRCIM considers action 62(k) has been satisfactorily implemented, while noting that assistance with traffic management for the CFA occurs on an ongoing annual basis.

RECOMMENDATION 63

The State enact legislation designed to achieve two specific ends:

63.1 appoint a Fire Commissioner as an independent statutory officer responsible to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and as the senior operational firefighter in Victoria

63.2 make the Chief Fire Officer of the Department of Sustainability and Environment a statutory appointment.

The Fire Commissioner should have responsibility for the following:

• promoting and directing reform aimed at increasing the operational capability, interoperability and resilience of Victoria’s fire services
• developing and building operational capacity to prepare for the days of highest bushfire risk and exercising control over level 3 fires as the permanent State Controller
• providing to Government periodic advice on the metropolitan fire district boundary on the basis of triggers, frequency and criteria approved by Government
• representing Victorian interests on operational matters in national committees.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63(a) Enact legislation to appoint a Fire Services Commissioner</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63(b) Enact legislation to make Chief Fire Officer of DSE a statutory appointee</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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PROGRESS

In its Final Report, the VBRC examined the current arrangements of Victoria’s fire services in the context of operational improvement and reform. Evidence was given to the VBRC on the strengths and weaknesses of the current arrangements and also the operational shortcomings experienced during the fires of 2009. The VBRC recommended the appointment of an independent FSC and the state supported this recommendation.

63(a) Enact legislation to appoint a Fire Services Commissioner

The state has enacted legislation to appoint a FSC as an independent statutory officer responsible to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

The FSC Act was passed in October 2010 and provides for the appointment, powers and functions of the FSC and amends Victoria’s emergency management arrangements so the FSC is the State Fire Controller in response to major fires. The FSC has responsibility for promoting and directing reform aimed at increasing the operational capability, interoperability and resilience in Victoria’s fire services.

An office of the FSC has also been established to assist the FSC in overseeing and working with the three Victorian fire services (the CFA, MFB and DSE) on planning and preparing for major fires and improving integration and performance of the three fire services. Further information on the office can be found on the FSC website at www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au.

The inaugural FSC, Mr Craig Lapsley, was appointed in October 2010. Since his appointment, the FSC has focussed on a number of issues including:

- incident management capability, capacity, systems and training
- community information and warnings
- fire service performance standards
- fire services reform
- control of “major fire” in Victoria.

The BRCIM notes the work undertaken by the FSC since his commencement, particularly in relation to the Fire Service Reform Action Plan and the development of work programs for each of the fire services agencies. The FSC has consulted with the BRCIM in relation to the development of the Fires Services Reform Action Plan and strategic directions and priorities. The appointment of the FSC near the commencement of the 2010-11 fire season, combined with a relatively benign fire season have provided limited opportunities for the FSC to become involved across the board on all wide ranging issues.

It is envisaged that as the year progresses and as the state heads towards the 2011-12 fire season there will be ample opportunities for the FSC’s role to be tested through real time fire emergencies and for the role to become fully embedded into the state’s existing emergency management structures.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

The FSC has been responsible for leading the implementation of a number of the VBRC’s recommendations in consultation with the fire services and other government departments and agencies. Specific information on the progress of work carried out by the FSC in implementing these recommendations is outlined in the response to the recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 26.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 63(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

63(b) Enact legislation to make the Chief Officer of DSE a statutory appointee

The FSC Act also amended the Forests Act 1958 to provide for a Chief Fire Officer of DSE to be employed under Part 3 of the Public Administration Act 2004. The Forests Act now provides that the Secretary of DSE may authorise the Chief Officer (as appointed under the Act) to perform any functions that the Secretary has in respect of fire related activities in every state national park or on protected public land. Previously the Chief Officer of DSE had no statutory powers and was not on the same standing as the Chief Officers of the CFA and MFB.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 63(b) has been satisfactorily implemented.

**RECOMMENDATION 64**

The State replace the Fire Services Levy with a property-based levy and introduce concessions for low-income earners.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

The state has committed to introduce a property based fire services levy to replace the current system. The Implementation Plan sets out the timeframe for introducing the new property based levy with legislation to be introduced in 2012.

A position paper was released by DTF in June 2011, which will outline the proposed arrangements. The BRCIM is yet to meet with DTF to discuss the implementation actions as set out in Implementation Plan in response to implementing recommendation 64.

Finding: The BRCIM will revisit recommendation 64 as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**RECOMMENDATION 65**

The Commonwealth establish a national centre for bushfire research in collaboration with other Australian jurisdictions to support pure, applied and long-term research in the physical, biological and social sciences relevant to bushfires and to promote continuing research and scholarship in related disciplines.

Recommendation 65 is directed to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has provided the BRCIM with the following update:

*The Bushfire CRC was allocated $15 million over three years (2010-11 to 2012-13) in the 2009-10 Federal Budget, for specific research tasks arising from the 2009 Victorian bushfires including understanding fire risk, communicating risk and managing the threat. The Bushfire CRC will submit its first Annual Report on 30 October 2011.*
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

In February 2011, in the context of endorsing the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, COAG tasked the NEMC to develop a proposal for a national disaster resilience centre of excellence in consultation with potential partner institutions. There are synergies between the aims of this recommendation and the centre of excellence work, and the AGD will continue to engage with all partners to progress the intent of these proposals.

### STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>65(a) Victoria in collaboration with other jurisdictions to assist in providing national leadership on bushfire research.</td>
<td>31/12/2011&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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### PROGRESS

**65(a) Victoria in collaboration with other jurisdictions to assist in providing national leadership on bushfire research.**

The state supports this recommendation while noting it is a matter for the Commonwealth.

The BRCIM has been advised by DPC that a number of Victorian tertiary institutions have expressed a strong interest in hosting a new national research centre. There is already a significant amount of research into bushfire and other hazards undertaken in Victoria through universities and the Bushfire CRC and also government led research through DSE, CFA and other agencies.

Following consultation with DPC and other stakeholders, the Bushfire CRC is refining a proposed model for an Australasian Fire Research Institute. The Victorian Government has urged the Commonwealth to consider building on the existing expertise of Victorian based higher education and research institutions to create a new national research centre. At its meeting on 16 September 2010, the NEMC tasked one of its sub-committees to investigate options to take forward this recommendation in an all hazards context in consultation with the Australian Emergency Management Institute.

**Finding:** The BRCIM notes the progress underway in establishing a national centre for bushfire research and will revisit action 65(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

### RECOMMENDATION 66

**The State appoint an independent monitor or the Victorian Auditor-General to assess progress with implementing the Commission’s recommendations and report to the Parliament and the people of Victoria by 31 July 2012.**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66(a) Appoint Independent Monitor</td>
<td>14/10/2010</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>66(b) Provide Implementation Monitor’s Report to Parliament</td>
<td>July 2011, July 2012</td>
<td>On track</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>22</sup> Previously no date provided.
Progress made on Implementation of VBRC Final Report Recommendations

PROGRESS

For further details on the appointment of the Independent Monitor please refer to Chapter 3 in this Progress Report.

RECOMMENDATION 67

The State consider the development of legislation for the conduct of inquiries in Victoria - in particular, the conduct of royal commissions.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>67(a) Develop a policy proposal for a public enquiries bill</td>
<td>No date(^{23})</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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</table>

PROGRESS

67(a) Develop a policy proposal for a public enquiries bill

The state has committed to develop a Public Enquiries Bill with DPC to progress this action.

Finding: The Implementation Plan does not provide a date for when the state will develop this Bill, although the October 2010 Plan prescribed that this would occur in 2011. The BRCIM will revisit action 67(a) as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

RECOMMENDATION 30 (Omitted from page 90)

The State amend the regulatory framework for electricity safety to require that distribution businesses adopt, as part of their management plans, measures to reduce the risks posed by hazard trees - that is, trees that are outside the clearance zone but that could come into contact with an electric power line having regard to foreseeable local conditions.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>30(a) Distribution businesses to submit amended plans to comply with new hazard tree requirements</td>
<td>31/03/2011</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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PROGRESS

30(a) Distribution businesses to submit amended plans to comply with new hazard tree requirements

All distribution businesses have provided ESV with their 2011-12 electric line clearance management plans as required under regulation 9(4) of the Electricity Safety (Electric Line Clearance) Regulations 2010. All of these plans make specific reference to the new hazard tree requirements. ESV is currently reviewing the plans and decisions regarding approval will be made following this evaluation process.

Finding: The BRCIM considers action 30(a) has been satisfactorily implemented.

\(^{23}\) Previous due date 31/12/2011.
Chapter 8 of Volume II of the VBRC Final Report – Relief And Recovery

In its Final Report, the VBRC noted that relief and recovery activities are made more difficult when the emergency is rapidly escalating and occurring at multiple locations. Further, the VBRC stressed that it is vital that the state improve its capacity to deal effectively with large-scale disasters affecting people in various localities by improving consistency in services provided by emergency relief centres.

The BRCIM notes the importance of improving the state’s capacity to provide relief and recovery services in the event of large scale emergencies occurring at multiple locations. During field visits to municipal councils in February and March 2011, emergency management staff at the City of Whittlesea council offices raised the Northern Metro Councils Resource Sharing Project (discussed below) as an example of a cooperative local government initiative aimed at improving the region’s capacity to deal with large scale emergencies impacting upon several municipalities.

Northern Metro Councils Resource Sharing project

This project will focus on the development of a regional framework for sharing resources and building organisational capacity for the provision of emergency relief and recovery services to the community.

The project involves the municipalities of Yarra, Darebin, Moreland, Hume, Nillumbik, Banyule and Whittlesea and received a grant through the Natural Disaster Resilience Grants Scheme. A Regional Project Manager was appointed to guide and resource tasks supporting a whole of region approach to the integrated planning and provision of relief and recovery.

A project steering group has been established comprising members from each council, DHS, VICSES and a representative from the Western Region Councils.

A draft of the Emergency Cooperation Plan has been developed outlining plan activation triggers and roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. It is envisaged that the plan would be activated if an emergency crosses municipal boundaries, runs for an extended period of time or overwhelms the resources of a municipality.

The purpose of the plan and supporting arrangements is to enhance the resilience of all councils by optimising the availability of resources, reducing the potential for conflicting response activities, avoiding duplication of effort, providing more effective relief and recovery services to communities affected by emergencies and preserving public confidence in the councils.

Project outcomes include:

1. a set of Standard Operating Procedures for Emergency Relief Centres and standardised documentation
2. a standard template for Relief and Recovery Plans
3. a Regional Training Plan for staff and volunteers
4. a report regarding the costs to develop, host and deliver e-learning training modules for relief centre training
5. mobilisation exercises in Emergency Relief Centres
6. networking opportunities for Municipal Recovery Managers and delegates
7. consistent and effective signage across councils.
The BRCIM commends the municipalities for the collaborative approach underpinning this valuable project. The project could be replicated in other parts of the state to more efficiently utilise municipal emergency relief and recovery resources. Additionally, the development of standard practices, procedures and training will foster cultural change toward a more strategic approach to emergency relief and recovery efforts and will improve the capacity of the state to respond to large scale emergencies occurring simultaneously in multiple locations.

The VBRC did not make any specific recommendations in Chapter 8 of its Final Report in relation to relief and recovery. It did, however, make some observations on these issues based on the evidence it received.

The state responded in the October 2010 Plan and the Implementation Plan by committing to 10 actions in response to the VBRC’s observations. The state’s 10 actions are listed below as 8.1 to 8.10. DH and DHS share leadership for actions 8.1 to 8.7 (inclusive), VBRRRA is the lead agency for actions 8.8 and 8.9 and DPI has leadership for 8.10.

STATE’S COMMITMENT

8.1 Update the State Health Emergency Response Plan to include a dedicated role of Health Commander

DH updated and published the State Health Emergency Response Plan (second edition) in 2009. This edition includes a new role of Health Commander within the incident management structure. The Health Commander is a senior ambulance manager who oversees and, where appropriate, directs the operational health response to a major incident. The Health Commander works with the Incident Controller and the Emergency Management Team to develop the health strategy and contribute to the Incident Strategy. The Health Commander establishes and coordinates a Health IMT, represents the Health IMT on the Emergency Management Team and contributes to the Incident Strategy and Incident Action Plan, via the Incident Controller as required. The State Health Emergency Response Plan also includes the role of the State Health and Medical Commander. This role has operational command of the overall state health response to emergencies having oversight of all of DH portfolios.


BRCIM Comment: The State Health Emergency Response Plan has been updated.
STATE’S COMMITMENT

8.2 Update Part 4 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria

8.3 Develop a single registration form

8.4 Develop a systematic approach to post-fire welfare checks

The EMMV provides the principal framework for emergency management in Victoria and provides details about the roles different organisations play in the emergency management arrangements. It is provided as a reference guide for emergency management practitioners, reflecting and creating the current emergency management arrangements in Victoria. A copy of the EMMV can be downloaded from the OESC website at www.oesc.vic.gov.au.

In October 2010, the state, through the lead agencies DH and DHS, updated the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan in Part 4 of the EMMV (Part 4) to clarify roles of recovery service providers and address a number of issues raised by the VBRC.

The BRCIM notes that the amendments to Part 4 are extensive and provide clarification as to the relief and recovery arrangements in Victoria. As there is not scope in this Progress Report to discuss each amendment to Part 4, attention has been directed to six pertinent and topical elements below.

(i) Roles of recovery service providers

Prior to the amendments to Part 4, roles and responsibilities of agencies for recovery were set out in Part 7. The updated Part 4 recognises the transfer of responsibility for emergency relief from Victoria Police and VICSES to DHS, supported by the Red Cross. It provides a broad explanation of the roles of the Commonwealth, the state and municipalities in relief and recovery activities. Part 7 remains the point of reference for definitions of which agency is the single control agency with responsibility to lead and manage the response components for specific types of emergencies.

(ii) Children and youth in recovery

The VBRC noted that the special needs of children need to be considered in the longer term. In July 2010, DH and DHS completed a literature review on children and youth in emergency recovery (this is covered at 8.6 below). Part 4 of the EMMV was amended to reflect learnings from this review, providing that the special needs of children and youth in emergencies need to be considered and that this group require targeted interventions, which differ from those aimed at adults. DEECD has responsibility for school activities around recovery and Part 4 provides that MEMPs need to incorporate and address the unique needs of children and youth in emergency relief and recovery.

(iii) Case management

The VBRC noted that while Part 4 of the EMMV establishes that DHS leads the case management service, it fails to provide information about how the service is delivered.

Part 4 provides that where the demand for case management is limited, existing recovery community service agencies and councils should meet the demand. DHS via the Regional Recovery Coordinator will seek authorisation and funding for additional case management resources where the demand is in excess of the capacity of the existing recovery community service agencies. MEMPs should identify arrangements for the delivery of case management by council staff or community services. Where the MEMP does not identify these arrangements, DHS will work with the council to identify a lead agency to deliver case management. Where primary producers are impacted, council should liaise with DPI to coordinate delivery of case management.
DHS commissioned an independent evaluation of the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service. This review is discussed at 8:7.

(iv) Relief Centre registration process

In its Final Report, the VBRC observed that during and following the 2009 bushfires, data collection was inconsistent and issues arose due to data being collected on paper and transferred to electronic records. The VBRC also noted that different registration forms used by different agencies and departments resulted in individuals having to provide their details twice.

In response, a single registration form is being developed addressing the privacy and standard format considerations identified by the VBRC. It will allow the reissuing of identification once the information has been collected and will identify welfare/support needs.

(v) Welfare and Outreach

The VBRC noted in its Final Report that there was no systematic approach to welfare checks in small communities and on properties. It considered that agencies should determine how to systematically implement post-fire welfare checks.

Part 4 of the EMMV was amended to provide the objectives of and agency responsible for outreach support following an emergency. The importance of providing all community members with access to core recovery information and services is stressed in this section. Municipal councils have primary responsibility for organising outreach support, including impact assessments, identification of vulnerable groups and provision of information. When required, municipal councils are to coordinate multi-agency outreach teams, including Red Cross and DPI.

(vi) Animal relief and welfare

On the basis of evidence submitted by DPI, the VBRC commented that the coordination of animal welfare during the 2009 bushfires was fragmented and that improving agency coordination would help to provide more effective relief to all animals regardless of whether they are wildlife, stock, companion animals or pets.

Part 4 of the EMMV was subsequently revised to include provision for animal welfare and relief for companion animals, livestock and wildlife. The amended Part 4 provides that the DPI is the agency responsible for coordinating all animal welfare (livestock, companion animals and wildlife). DPI will work with DSE, municipal councils, RSPCA, local veterinarians and volunteer groups involved with assisting the recovery of animals after emergencies. This includes:

- access to adequate feed and water
- provision of shelter
- housing and adequate space
- freedom from pain, injury, disease and obvious discomfort
- freedom from unnecessary fear and distress
- the ability to express normal patterns of behaviour.

In addition, Part 4 provides that MEMPs should detail local arrangements for assistance with urgent animal welfare needs, including emergency shelter, catering/fodder and veterinary needs for domestic pets, companion animals and agricultural livestock.

The BRCIM notes that Part 4 of the EMMV lists DPI as the agency responsible for animal welfare for companion animals, livestock and wildlife. This is inconsistent with Part 7 of the EMMV which
addresses Emergency Management Agency Roles and lists DSE as the primary agency for wildlife with DPI as a support agency.

Part 4 of the EMMV also makes brief reference to the responsibility of animal owners under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* without providing clear direction as to how this relates to DPI’s animal relief and welfare responsibilities following emergencies. This could create confusion for members of the public seeking to understand the services provided by the state in relation to relief and welfare for their animals.

The October 2010 Plan highlights the ability of DPI to appoint an Animal Welfare Coordinator and makes reference to the Victorian Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan. The BRCIM notes that no reference is made to these aspects of animal relief and welfare arrangements in Victoria in the amended Part 4 of the EMMV.

**BRCIM Comment:** Animal relief and welfare is an area which may benefit from further amendments to the EMMV to clarify roles and responsibility of agencies and animal owners in emergencies. Part 4 of the EMMV should be updated to reflect the arrangements as outlined in the state’s Implementation Plan. Further, these arrangements should be clearly communicated to the community.

The BRCIM notes that work continues around the state’s relief and recovery arrangements and will revisit this issue as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

**8.5 Update the Emergency Relief Handbook**

DH and DHS updated the Emergency Relief Handbook in October 2010. The general information section provides a comprehensive overview of Victoria’s key emergency relief functions. The main body of the handbook describes the importance of community engagement in emergency relief and outlines specific delivery arrangements focusing on the role of relief centres, emergency catering and material aid. The handbook contains a useful set of emergency relief centre checklists, which should help to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of emergency relief statewide.


**BRCIM Comment:** The Emergency Relief Handbook has been updated.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

**8.6 Undertake a literature review on Understanding the Unique Needs of Children and Youth in Emergency Recovery**

In July 2010, DHS produced a literature review titled, *Understanding the Unique Needs of Children and Youth in Emergency Recovery: A Literature Review*. The review produced 12 findings recommending how the state could better manage the needs of children and young people in emergencies.
Chapter 8 of Volume II of The VBRC Final Report – Relief And Recovery

One of these findings recommended that the state review the EMMV to consider:

- developmental stage of life
- psychosocial issues
- educational issues
- inclusion of parents, carers and families
- children separated from parents/careers/bereaved
- advocacy for children
- physical size
- emergency medical services
- case management
- relief centre management.

**BRCIM Comment:** The EMMV was subsequently amended to reflect these considerations. Refer to discussion at 8.2 above.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

8.7 **Independent evaluation of Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service**

The BRCIM has been advised that the evaluation has been completed. The state’s Implementation Plan notes that the evaluation found that the Victorian Bushfire Case Management Service has been successful with a high degree of satisfaction.

**BRCIM Comment:** The BRCIM is awaiting further advice on the evaluation and will revisit this as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

**STATE’S COMMITMENT**

8.8 **VBRRRA undertake a survey of households on levels of insurance by bushfire affected households**

The VBRC commented in its Final Report that insufficient insurance cover can stifle the recovery and rebuilding processes.

Part 4 of the EMMV was amended to provide that insurance advice may be included in the information available at emergency relief centres and that the Law Institute of Victoria is responsible for coordinating support from the legal community to those affected by bushfires.

Further, a survey was distributed in late July 2010 to 1508 households who lost their principal place of residence and had received the Destroyed Homes Grant from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. One thousand and fourteen households (67 per cent) completed the survey. The survey provides an excellent insight into the factors contributing to financial hardship for those households still in temporary accommodation. VBRRRA wrote to all respondents on 25 October 2010 providing an overview of the results and information about available support programs. Results were also provided to councils and a brief summary was included on the VBRRRA website.

Financial information obtained through the survey in relation to levels of insurance was provided on 4 October 2010 in-confidence only to the Insurance Council of Australia.

**BRCIM Comment:** The BRCIM notes that this survey has been conducted.
8.9 VBRR A undertake a Legacy Project following the 2009 fires

The VBRC noted that Victoria should review the relief, recovery and reconstruction activities following the 2009 fires to maximise learnings.

VBRRA has begun work on a Legacy Report that will:

- document the establishment, operation and closure of VBRRA
- evaluate the achievements of VBRRA and its recovery partners, including activities and processes that demonstrate best practice
- identify lessons learned during VBRRA’s period of operation and implications for recovery following future disasters.

The Legacy Report will draw on program evaluation, stakeholder forums, external research and case studies, commissioned reports and interviews with current and former staff, other state and non-government organisations and subject experts.

VBRRA ceased to operate from the end of June 2011. A Fire Recovery Unit (FRU) has been established within Regional Development Victoria. The FRU will oversee the ongoing bushfire rebuilding and recovery effort. It is the key government contact for affected communities and takes over some of the continuing functions of VBRRA. Information on the FRU is available from Regional Development Victoria’s website at www.rdv.vic.gov.au.

BRCIM Comment: This project is underway and due to be delivered by the end of June 2011. The BRCIM will revisit this issue as part of the BRCIM Final Report.

8.10 Review the Victorian Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan

As noted in 8.2, in October 2010, DH and DHS updated the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan in Part 4 of the EMMV to provide for animal relief and welfare for companion animals, livestock and wildlife.

BRCIM Comment: The BRCIM will revisit this issue as part of the BRCIM Final Report.
Chapter 9 of Volume II of The VBRC Final Report – Shared Responsibility

The VBRC did not make any specific recommendations in Chapter 9 of its Final Report in relation to shared responsibility. However, the VBRC described shared responsibility as a principle that pervaded all of the Final Report recommendations.

Similarly, shared responsibility is a theme that runs throughout this Progress Report and one that is critical to the success of many of the programs and initiatives discussed in this report.

Departments, agencies and councils are working hard to engage the community through bushfire advertising (including the Summer Fire Campaign) community engagement programs such as Fire Ready meetings and Community Fire Guard, advice and information services such as the Home Bushfire Advice Service and a range of other programs and initiatives.

The BRCIM has received anecdotal evidence that the level of community participation in these programs is falling across the state and that meaningful engagement at a community or individual level has been challenging due to levels of apathy toward bushfire preparation. Following two benign fire seasons and devastating floods, many Victorians have become complacent about bushfires and the threat they pose to life and property.

There is still, understandably, a great deal of emotion surrounding the tragedy of the February 2009 bushfires. Yet, there are some members of the community who appear no better prepared for bushfire than they were over two years ago, before that terrible event.

The state must do more to connect with and engage individuals and communities in bushfire planning and preparedness. Clear, practical and long term advice about bushfire preparedness needs to reach the community in order to bring about behavioural change.

Likewise, the Victorian public shares this responsibility of preparing for and protecting themselves from bushfires.

The BRCIM notes the following two initiatives, which showcase programs designed to mitigate and respond to bushfire risk at a local level based on this fundamental principle of shared responsibility.

Weeds to Mulch Program

During field visits to municipal councils, the BRCIM made note of local initiatives that demonstrate good practice in bushfire preparation and resilience.

The “Weeds to Mulch” program is one such initiative, implemented by the Surf Coast Shire in an attempt to reduce the fuel load in residential areas and increase community awareness of the relationship between vegetation and fire behaviour.

The program encourages and facilitates residents in the removal of fuel on their properties by providing free mulching of all vegetation cleared and placed by the roadside. The program aims to communicate the message that ongoing maintenance is imperative to the long term sustainability, resilience and survivability of the community.

Information about the program was distributed to residents via letters and fliers. Surf Coast Shire Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers were available for site visits to residents’ properties to assist in identifying vegetation for removal. This involved engagement with the landowner and advice on:

- the different plant species currently on their property
• identifying woody weed species required to be removed to reduce fuel loads to a medium level for the protection of life and assets
• assessing any other vegetation that may be a risk to that house or neighbouring houses.

The Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers aim to establish a balance between fire prevention and environmental biodiversity outcomes in advice provided to landowners. Advice was also provided to residents by the council as to how to manage fuel on their property.

At a time specified by Surf Coast Shire the removed vegetation was mulched and moved to accessible collection sites for use by residents and community groups.

The program was initially trialled in Anglesea in 2009 and has since been conducted in Moggs Creek, Fairhaven, Aireys Inlet and Lorne.

To date, the program has facilitated the clearing of in excess of 970 square cubic metres of chipped fuel and reduced the overall fuel load to a medium level under the Tolhurst House Ignition Likelihood Index.

The BRCIM commends the Surf Coast Shire for its work in relation to the Weeds to Mulch program. The BRCIM considers that this program could be adopted by other municipal councils to engage residents in fuel reduction activities, increase awareness about bushfire preparedness and reduce the fuel loading on private properties in high bushfire risk areas.
Local Incident Management Planning - Cann River

In the Delivery Report, the BRCIM brought to the attention of the VBRC an initiative driven and championed by the community of Cann River.

The Cann River Local Incident Management Plan (LIMP) provides a comprehensive all hazards plan for local residents and visitors and illustrates the concept of shared responsibility in practice. The LIMP is based on a shared understanding that local knowledge, planning and action will create community resilience in emergencies.

A LIMP drill was conducted in October 2010 and involved agencies and community members in Cann River. This drill ensured that any changes to the LIMP are communicated and understood by all. The drill was an opportunity to maintain and foster relationships between agencies and the community and between different agencies themselves. The BRCIM notes that the testing of emergency plans (whether it be TPPs, evacuation plans or LIMPs) is essential in ensuring that all involved, including the community, understand how to act and what to expect in an emergency.

Since the Delivery Report, the LIMP has been accepted by the East Gippsland Shire Council and is now incorporated into their MEMP and IFMP.

Further, the LIMP model has been adopted in other townships in the East Gippsland Shire.

As is the case with many local initiatives, the development and success of the Cann River LIMP can be largely attributed to a number of local champions. While the contribution of champions is invaluable, local projects may be open to vulnerabilities should their champion(s) step down for any reason. This was identified as an issue in the 10 Year Review of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert Siren System discussed at action1(g). Governance arrangements can mitigate risks by building safeguards into the project should the champion(s) step down. In addition, local champions should be supported in their role by local and state governments.

The BRCIM commends the Cann River community and emergency services personnel for this work. Learnings from the development, ongoing maintenance and review of the LIMP model could be considered as part of the review of TPPs currently being undertaken by the state.
CONCLUSION

Fire in the landscape in Victoria is a common occurrence over summer periods. The bushfires of 2009 were a timely reminder that prevention and suppression activities are in some cases no match for the unpredictable nature and strength of a bushfire.

It is now one year since the VBRC released its Final Report. The state, in implementing the VBRC’s recommendations, has embarked on a number of complex projects and has invested significant resources in their development and implementation. Many of these projects require the development of new policies and initiatives, which are directing the state toward new approaches to fire prevention and suppression where Victoria is leading the world.

As outlined in Chapter 5, this Progress Report has only reported on evidence provided by agencies up to 3 June 2011. Many of the actions are due to be delivered after 30 June 2011, with some not due for completion for many years. The BRCIM will provide details on progress and completion of all actions up to June 2012 in the BRCIM Final Report to be tabled in Parliament by 31 July 2012. Where possible in the BRCIM Final Report, the BRCIM will also provide details of the progress of longer term actions.

The BRCIM will revisit a number of issues in the BRCIM Final Report that require further development and monitoring including:

- Bushfire Safety Policy Framework
- shelter options
- TPPs
- arrangements for vulnerable people
- changes to the planning and building regime in Victoria
- Fire Services Levy
- non-compulsory buy back of properties in high risk bushfire areas
- reducing bushfire risk in relation to power lines
- efforts to improve the interaction between agencies and councils for the purposes of planning and preparing for bushfires.

The work of agencies in implementing actions, sometimes tirelessly within short time periods, is commended. However, moving towards another fire season and the third anniversary of the 2009 bushfires, the state must not be complacent and lose momentum in implementing the required actions within the agreed timelines. The timely, efficient and effective implementation of the commitments contained in the state’s Implementation Plan is fundamental to achieving the expectations of the VBRC.

Governments, fire agencies, communities and individuals must share the responsibility and all have a role to play in fire safety. It is in everyone’s interest that individuals, households and communities participate in education programs about fire safety awareness, planning and preparation.

Further information on the BRCIM is available on the BRCIM’s website at www.bushfiresmonitor.vic.gov.au.
APPENDIX 1

2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report: Recommendations which were not fully implemented at the time of publication of the Delivery Report

Recommendation 4.3
The State commission research into the development of a new fire severity scale that denotes the risk posed by dangerous and extremely dangerous bushfires (similar to the cyclone categories 1 to 5).

Recommendation 4.8
The Australian Government, Council of Australian Governments and the State determine whether it is technically possible to implement the second phase of the national telephony-based warning system (that is, the delivery of warning messages to mobile phones based on the physical location of a handset at the time of the emergency) with a view to implementation for the 2009–10 bushfire season.

Recommendation 5.1
The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and the Bureau of Meteorology collaborate with researchers to explore options for the fire danger indices and fire danger ratings including:

- an additional fire danger rating beyond ‘Extreme’;
- adjusting the existing fire danger ratings to correspond to higher Fire Danger Index values; and
- developing a revised fire severity scale for use in bushfire warnings based on new fire danger ratings.

Recommendation 5.3
The State ensure that a single, multi-agency portal for bushfire information be established that uploads information simultaneously to both CFA and DSE websites.

Recommendation 5.4
The State ensure that the single multi-agency portal for bushfire information be designed to allow Incident Control Centres to directly post information and warnings.

Recommendation 6.2
The CFA amend its policy Advice to the Community Before and During Wildfire to enable trained CFA personnel to recommend to particular households, communities or locations that they plan to leave early, based on an assessment of defendability, the vulnerabilities of the people there, and the degree of ease with which people are able to leave the area in relative safety.

Recommendation 6.4
Municipal councils review their Municipal Emergency Management Plans to ensure there is appropriate provision for relocation during bushfires, in particular, to indicate the location and arrangements associated with designated emergency relief centres.

Recommendation 7.2
The CFA consider the means of providing individual advice to residents in bushfire prone areas, as to the defendability of their homes.
Recommendation 7.5
The State and its agencies implement an advertising and awareness campaign on the changes to policy and practices as set out in this report, such as the Standard Emergency Warning Signal, telephony-based warning system, use of sirens by local communities, refuges and relocation.

Recommendation 8.1
The CFA report to the Commission on the outcome of the trials of the Victorian Fire Risk Register and progress with its implementation.

Recommendation 8.2

Recommendation 8.4
The State replace the 2005 Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice following its current review by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.

Recommendation 8.5
The State promulgate criteria for the identification and operation of neighbourhood safer places, and involve councils and local communities in their development and implementation as appropriate.

Recommendation 8.6
The State to have commenced progressively identifying, establishing and advertising designated community refuges and neighbourhood safer places, giving priority to areas where bushfire risk is identified as high.

Recommendation 8.10
The State report to the Commission on the results of the implementation and effectiveness of its township protection plan program and neighbourhood safer places program.

Recommendation 9.1
The State ensure that State Duty Officers of the CFA and DSE be given direct responsibility for ensuring pre-designated level 3 Incident Control Centres within their respective control are properly staffed and equipped to enable immediate operation in the case of a fire on high fire risk days.

Recommendation 9.2
The CFA and DSE agree procedures to ensure the most experienced, qualified and competent person is appointed as Incident Controller for each fire, irrespective of the point of ignition of the fire.

Recommendation 12.3
The State further promote, through the Council of Australian Governments, more effective emergency call service arrangements throughout Australia.
APPENDIX 2

2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report 2: Priorities for Building in Bushfire Prone Areas

Recommendation 1

The Australian Building Codes Board continue to progress the development of a standard for bushfire bunkers, that addresses matters including, but not limited to, fire resistance, structural strength, resistance to high winds, maintenance of tenable conditions, minimum functional size, maximum period of occupancy, visual communication with outside, siting, access and signage, and make it publicly available no later than 30 April 2010.

Recommendation 2

The Australian Building Codes Board amend the Building Code of Australia (BCA) to include bunkers in the classes of building regulated by the BCA. This amendment should take effect with the publication of the 2010 edition of the BCA.

Recommendation 3

The Australian Building Codes Board reference the national standard for bushfire bunkers in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) as soon as possible, ideally in the 2010 edition of the BCA.

Recommendation 4

The Commonwealth, through the Building Minister’s Forum, encourage all jurisdictions to adopt the standard for bushfire bunkers as soon as practicable once it is developed and/or referenced in the Building Code of Australia.

Recommendation 5


Recommendation 6

Standards Australia, no later than 31 March 2010:

- publish amendments to AS3959-2009 that address inclusion of unmanaged grassland in the vegetation types and classifications, and use of sarking as a secondary ember protection measure; and
- report to the Commission on progress of amendments to AS3959-2009 to increase ember protection measures at lower Bushfire Attack Levels, in particular in relation to subfloor requirements and materials prescribed for doors, windows and wall barriers.

Recommendation 7
