Progress Report
Victorian Bushfires
Royal Commission

Implementation of
recommendations and actions

1 August 2016
Preface

In 2015, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) assumed responsibility for monitoring the implementation of remaining recommendations and related actions from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC).

Monitoring the implementation of recommendations and actions from inquiries and reviews is one of IGEM’s key activities in providing assurance to government and our communities of the emergency management sector’s commitment to reducing the likelihood, effect and consequences of emergencies.

In August 2015, IGEM’s first VBRC implementation monitoring report prepared for the Minister for Emergency Services (the minister), detailed that of the 21 ongoing actions, eight actions were complete, and two were closed.

Based on the evidence provided by relevant agencies and departments at that time, IGEM expected the remaining 11 actions would be completed within the following 12 month reporting period.

In this 2016 progress report, of the 11 actions remaining in 2015, seven actions have been determined as closed and two actions deemed as completed.

The two remaining ongoing and inter-related actions will continue to be monitored by IGEM however their completion will be reported directly to the minister. Therefore, this 2016 progress report now concludes IGEM’s responsibility for annual VBRC implementation reporting.

In the five years since actions were first developed in response to the VBRC’s final report, Victoria’s emergency management arrangements have undergone significant reform, particularly through the State’s commitment to an all-agencies, all-communities approach.

A number of the then ongoing VBRC actions closely align with actions being undertaken in response to the 2014 and 2015–16 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry reports and the Independent Investigation of the 2015 Lancefield-Cobaw Fire that the IGEM will continue to monitor.

Additionally, the introduction of a rolling three-year action plan – the Victorian Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan (SAP) – and its associated reform actions will guide the continual improvement of emergency management arrangements in Victoria.

IGEM’s monitoring and reporting responsibilities associated with the SAP will provide confidence to the government and our communities in the progress and efficacy of these reforms towards realising the emergency management sector’s vision of safer and more resilient communities.

I am grateful for the cooperation and contribution of the many government departments and emergency management sector organisations enabling the preparation of this report which clearly demonstrates the collegiate approach to assuring Victoria’s emergency management arrangements.

Tony Pearce
Inspector-General for Emergency Management
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## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BICT</td>
<td>Bushfire Information Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRCIM</td>
<td>Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Country Fire Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDJTR</td>
<td>Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Emergency Alert</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Emergency Management Information System</td>
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<td>EMCOP</td>
<td>Emergency Management Common Operating Picture</td>
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<td>EMOCP</td>
<td>Emergency Management Operational Communications Plan</td>
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<td>EMV</td>
<td>Emergency Management Victoria</td>
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<td>ESV</td>
<td>Energy Safe Victoria</td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Fuel Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGEM</td>
<td>Inspector-General for Emergency Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Fire &amp; Emergency Services Board</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Metropolitan Mobile Radio</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSOM</td>
<td>One Source One Message</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBSP</td>
<td>Powerline Bushfire Safety Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMR</td>
<td>Regional Mobile Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMRCC</td>
<td>Regional Mobile Radio Command Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Strategic Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRC</td>
<td>State Crisis and Resilience Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERP</td>
<td>State Emergency Response Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBA</td>
<td>Victorian Building Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBRC</td>
<td>Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICSES</td>
<td>Victoria State Emergency Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The 2009 Victorian bushfires claimed 173 lives, destroyed or damaged more than 2,000 homes and burned about 430,000 hectares of land (VBRC 2010).

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) made 67 recommendations to improve the State’s preparation for, response to, and recovery from bushfires.

Between 2010 and 2014, the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM) was responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations and associated actions from the VBRC.

In 2015, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) assumed responsibility for all ongoing monitoring of the remaining recommendations and related actions. IGEM is required to prepare an annual progress report for the Minister for Emergency Services (the minister) on all ongoing VBRC recommendations and related actions until they have been satisfactorily implemented.

This is IGEM’s second report on the implementation of VBRC recommendations and actions, and includes progress from 2 May 2015 to 20 May 2016.

Table i describes the implementation status that IGEM has assigned to each of the remaining VBRC actions.

Table i: IGEM implementation status descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Action has been satisfactorily implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>An action may be closed if:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- the intent of the action can no longer be met, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- the action is long-term, progressing satisfactorily with robust governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>arrangements in place. IGEM will continue to monitor the progress of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>action through the lead agency’s annual report until IGEM deems that the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>action has been satisfactorily implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Action will continue to be monitored.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2015, IGEM reported that seven recommendations and 11 actions remained ongoing.

Of the 11 actions reported as ongoing in 2015 (see Table ii), IGEM now considers Actions 1(n), 13(a), 13(b), 22(k), 56(d), 56(f) and 59(b) to be closed.

Actions 22(i) and 27(d)(ix) have been completed.

Action 1(n) is now longer-term and part of an overarching project while Actions 13(a) and 13(b) no longer meet the intent of the actions. Actions 22(k) and 59(b) can now be considered to be business as usual and no longer require direct monitoring by IGEM.

The intent of Actions 56(d) and 56(f) can no longer be met as the State has moved to risk-based rather than hectare-based targets for planned burning.

IGEM has found that the following two actions remain ongoing:

- 49(h) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements
- 49(i) Develop guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings.

IGEM, in its 2015 Progress Report, urged the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to progress Action 49(h) as a priority, recognising its significantly overdue status.

DELWP has now reported that amended building regulations are being prepared and anticipates completion by August 2016, subject to relevant approvals.

The completion of Action 49(i) is contingent on implementation of Action 49(h).

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA), which is leading implementation of Action 49(i), estimates that it may take up to six months from release of the amended regulations to develop and publish the guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings.

IGEM will continue to monitor the implementation of Actions 49(h) and 49(i) and report directly to the minister when they are complete.

This report will end IGEM’s responsibility for annual progress reporting on implementation of VBRC recommendations and actions.

Table ii: Status of VBRC recommendations and actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>LEAD AGENCY</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(n)</td>
<td>Ensure integration of One Source One Message (OSOM) and Emergency Alert</td>
<td>30/06/2014*</td>
<td>EMV</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13(a)</td>
<td>Review state of disaster provisions in the Emergency Management Act 1986 (EM Act) to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations</td>
<td>31/12/2012</td>
<td>EMV</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13(b)</td>
<td>Amend the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) based on amendments to the EM Act re: state of disaster</td>
<td>31/12/2012</td>
<td>EMV</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(i)</td>
<td>Standardise interconnections of radio networks between CFA and DEPI</td>
<td>30/06/2014*</td>
<td>CFA</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF</td>
<td>ACTION</td>
<td>DUE DATE</td>
<td>LEAD AGENCY</td>
<td>STATUS</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>22(k)</td>
<td>Fire agencies to develop and enhance fire information systems and upgrade existing tools such as FireWeb</td>
<td>14/10/2014</td>
<td>DELWP</td>
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<td>27(d)</td>
<td>Targeted work program for distribution businesses to reduce bushfire risk (ix) Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) considers new standards for power line construction in highest bushfire risk areas</td>
<td>30/06/2016</td>
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<td>49(h)</td>
<td>Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements</td>
<td>31/03/2012</td>
<td>DELWP</td>
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<tr>
<td>49(i)</td>
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<td>Closed</td>
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<td>56(f)</td>
<td>Identify changes required to effectively and efficiently achieve the target planned burn</td>
<td>30/06/2014*</td>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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<tr>
<td>59(b)</td>
<td>Amend operational manuals and guides and advise all staff</td>
<td>1/12/2012</td>
<td>DELWP</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor reporting date
1 Introduction

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) made 67 recommendations to improve the State’s preparation for, response to, and recovery from bushfires. Between 2010 and 2014, the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor (BRCIM) was responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of recommendations and associated actions from the VBRC. In 2015, the Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) assumed responsibility for all ongoing monitoring of the remaining recommendations and related actions. IGEM is required to prepare an annual progress report for the Minister for Emergency Services (the minister) on all ongoing VBRC recommendations and related actions until they have been satisfactorily implemented.

In 2015, IGEM reported that seven recommendations and 11 actions remained ongoing.

This is IGEM’s second report on the implementation of VBRC recommendations and actions, and reports on progress from 2 May 2015 to 20 May 2016.

2 Background

2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

The 2009 Victorian bushfires claimed 173 lives, destroyed or damaged more than 2,000 homes and burned about 430,000 hectares of land (VBRC 2010).

The 2009 VBRC was established to investigate the causes of, and response to, these bushfires. The 2009 VBRC Final Report was handed down on 31 July 2010 and included 67 recommendations, addressing a broad range of issues including community warnings, shelter options, emergency management governance and incident management, powerline safety, planning and building, and land and fuel management.

The Victorian Government released Implementing the Government’s Response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission May 2011 (State Government of Victoria 2011) (the Implementation Plan), supporting all of the VBRC’s recommendations and outlining over 300 actions that would be undertaken to address them.

Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor

On 14 October 2010, the Victorian Government appointed Mr Neil Comrie AO, APM as the independent BRCIM. The BRCIM was responsible for monitoring, reviewing, and reporting on the progress of agencies in carrying out the actions described in the government’s Implementation Plan.

The BRCIM met with stakeholders including the heads of the fire services and representatives from departments and agencies involved in implementing the VBRC’s Final Report recommendations. These meetings confirmed the agreed timeframes between the BRCIM and each stakeholder for the implementation of actions.

The BRCIM delivered the following reports:
- Progress Report - July 2011
- Final Report - July 2012
- Annual Report - July 2013
- Annual Report - July 2014

The Annual Report, July 2014 was the BRCIM’s last report. It was tabled in Parliament on 5 August 2014 and listed 11 recommendations and 21 actions as ongoing.

In his 2014 report, the BRCIM recommended that IGEM prepare an annual progress report for the minister, for publication, on all ongoing VBRC recommendations and related actions (BRCIM 2014, p. 8). This would ensure that the ongoing actions continued to be monitored in a robust and transparent manner. The Victorian Government issued the Government Response to the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor 2014 Annual Report in August 2014 (State Government of Victoria 2014).

Inspector-General for Emergency Management

The IGEM is a legislated appointment established under the Emergency Management Act 2013 (the Act) to:
- provide assurance to government and the community in respect of emergency management arrangements in Victoria
- foster continuous improvement of emergency management in Victoria.

The Act requires IGEM to develop and maintain a monitoring and assurance framework for emergency management, against which the capacity, capability and performance of the emergency management sector is to be assessed.

Under the Act, IGEM is also required to, at the request of the minister, monitor and report to the minister on the implementation of recommendations arising from reports in relation to the emergency management sector in whole or in part.

On 2 September 2014, the Victorian Government requested that IGEM complete a progress report on the ongoing VBRC implementation actions in accordance with section 64(1)(c) of the Act.

IGEM is required to produce a progress report by 1 August each year on all ongoing recommendations and actions, including advice as to when each action had been satisfactorily implemented, and to do so annually until all of the implementation actions are complete.

The government also directed departments and agencies with responsibility for the implementation of actions to provide an update on the progress of each action in their annual reports until IGEM reported that the action has been satisfactorily implemented.

1 Due to a number implementation actions not due for completion until after the BRCIM’s Final Report in July 2012, the Parliament passed legislation in June 2012 requiring the BRCIM to prepare two additional annual reports.
3 Approach

IGEM requires responsible agencies to provide progress updates twice a year on actions for which they are responsible.

Current departments and agencies with responsibility for implementing ongoing VBRC recommendations and actions include:

- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)
- Energy Safe Victoria (ESV)
- Victorian Building Authority (VBA).

IGEM requested interim progress updates from lead departments and agencies in December 2015, and then wrote to Chief Executive Officers and heads of those departments and agencies in April 2016, formally requesting progress updates with supporting documentary evidence, such as policies, procedures, manuals, guides and meeting minutes.

IGEM assessed the updates to determine their status, and met with nominated representatives from departments and agencies to clarify information or request additional documentation if required.

A number of ongoing VBRC actions closely align with actions being undertaken in relation to IGEM’s other monitoring and reporting responsibilities such as the Emergency Management Strategic Action Plan (SAP), the 2014 and 2015–16 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Reports, and the Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire (State Government of Victoria 2015a).

IGEM utilises relevant information provided in relation to all three to avoid duplication and minimise the administrative burden on agencies.

Table 1 describes the implementation status that IGEM has assigned to each of the remaining VBRC actions.

Table 1: IGEM implementation status descriptions

<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the action is long-term, progressing satisfactorily with robust governance arrangements in place. IGEM will continue to monitor the progress of the action through the lead agency’s annual report until IGEM deems that the action has been satisfactorily implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Action will continue to be monitored.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IGEM consulted with relevant departments and agencies prior to finalisation of the report.

Progress in relation to the ongoing actions is reported up to 20 May 2016.

IGEM is responsible for providing the minister with a progress report by 1 August each year until all of the implementation actions have been completed.

Additionally, IGEM may also provide the minister with progress updates and verbal or written advice from time to time on issues relating to any of the actions.

Acknowledgements

IGEM acknowledges the high level of cooperation and support received from Victorian Government departments and agencies in preparing this report.

4 Reader’s guide

This progress report is IGEM’s assessment of the status of each implementation action reported as ‘ongoing’ in IGEM’s 2015 Progress Report.

The report does not repeat all of the VBRC recommendations. Readers wishing to review all VBRC recommendations and implementation actions are referred to the BRCIM’s earlier reports.

The BRCIM provides comprehensive background to VBRC recommendations and the actions implemented by the State, including detailed overall findings in relation to certain recommendations (BRCIM 2012).

That level of detail is not reproduced in this report.
5 Status of VBRC implementation actions

This is IGEM’s second report on the implementation of VBRC recommendations and actions, and includes progress from 2 May 2015 to 20 May 2016.

It has been five years since actions were first developed in response to the VBRC Final Report.

Since then, the emergency management sector has undergone major reform and a number of actions, particularly in relation to emergency management communication infrastructure, have evolved in line with technological progress and the sector’s shift towards broader all-agency projects.

In 2015, IGEM reported that seven recommendations and 11 actions remained ongoing.

Of the 11 actions reported as ongoing in 2015 (see Table 2), IGEM now considers Actions 1(n), 13(a), 13(b), 22(k), 56(d), 56(f) and 59(b) to be closed.

Actions 22(i) and 27(d)(ix) have been completed.

Action 1(n) is now longer-term and part of an overarching project while Actions 13(a) and 13(b) no longer meet the intent of the actions. Actions 22(k) and 59(b) can now be considered to be business as usual and no longer require direct monitoring by IGEM.

The intent of Actions 56(d) and 56(f) can no longer be met as the State has moved to risk-based rather than hectare-based targets for planned burning.

IGEM has found that the following two actions remain ongoing:

- 49(h) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements
- 49(i) Develop guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings

In its 2015 Progress Report, IGEM urged DELWP to progress Action 49(h) as a priority, recognising its significantly overdue status.

DELWP has now reported that amended building regulations are being prepared and anticipates completion by August 2016, subject to relevant approvals.

The completion of Action 49(i) is contingent on implementation of Action 49(h).

The VBA, which is leading implementation of Action 49(i), estimates that it may take up to six months from release of the amended regulations to develop and publish the guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings.

IGEM will continue to monitor the implementation of Actions 49(h) and 49(i) and report directly to the minister when they are complete.

This report will end IGEM’s responsibility for annual progress reporting on implementation of VBRC recommendations and actions.

Table 2 provides a full listing of the implementation actions with their updated status. The references in the first column are prefaced with the recommendation numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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</table>

*Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor reporting date
6 Progress update of VBRC implementation actions

This section provides the progress update and finding for each of the 11 actions reported as ‘ongoing’ in IGEM’s 2015 Progress Report.

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:

- 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
- emphasise that all fires are different in ways that require an awareness of fire conditions, local circumstances and personal capacity
- recognise that the heightened risk on the worst days demands a different response
- retain those elements of the existing bushfire policy that have proved effective
- strengthen the range of options available in the face of fire, including community refuges, bushfire shelters and evacuation
- ensure that local solutions are tailored and known to communities through local bushfire planning
- improve advice on the nature of fire and house defendability, taking account of broader landscape risks.

Implementation action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(n) Ensure integration of One Source One Message (OSOM) and Emergency Alert</td>
<td>30/06/2014*</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1(n) Ensure integration of One Source One Message (OSOM) and Emergency Alert

One Source One Message (OSOM) is a web-based messaging system, currently used in Victoria by CFA and DELWP, the Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board (MFB), and Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), to issue emergency warnings.

The system provides a single source of information for each agency’s website from Incident Control Centres, to be published within a few minutes of being authorised by an Incident Controller.

The same information also goes to the Victorian Bushfire Information Line and official emergency broadcasters such as ABC Radio.

Emergency Alert (EA) is the national telephone warning system used by emergency services to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones, within a defined area, about likely or actual emergencies.

EMV has previously reported that OSOM and EA would be integrated into the Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (EMCOP) application prior to the 2015–16 summer season.

EMV describes EMCOP as a web-based information gathering, planning and collaboration tool that operates on devices such as desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones. It provides emergency managers and stakeholders with the means to gather, organise, create and share emergency management information between emergency managers and other personnel.

EMCOP is intended to share information efficiently across all tiers of emergency management and to have a built-in warnings component to enable dissemination of warnings to the community.

EMV has reported that OSOM will be decommissioned and its functionality integrated into the warnings component of EMCOP by the 2016–17 summer. The functionality of EA will also be integrated into EMCOP, which may occur after incorporation of OSOM.

The Contract Management Oversight Committee is a national committee comprising representatives from each of the jurisdictions associated with the EA system. Victoria chairs this committee and, as the lead jurisdiction, has contract management responsibility for EA.

EMV received a quotation from Telstra to undertake the work that would achieve integration of EA with EMCOP. However, EMV advised that this work will not proceed due to cost and security issues. EMV will begin a procurement process within the next 12 months to replace the current EA platform. It is proposed that the new EA platform will have fully protected access and full integration with EMCOP.

EMV anticipates that the delivery of this new system will occur in June 2018.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that development and implementation of EMCOP is ongoing and work is underway by EMV to develop and implement a three-year plan to strengthen EMCOP, including improving the interoperability, use, access and consolidation of emergency management information, systems and data.

IGEM also notes that EA is a national telephone warning system, in use across multiple jurisdictions and its integration with EMCOP has presented challenges.

EMV is now commencing a procurement process for a new EA platform, which it estimates will not be in production until June 2018.

Given the extended timeframe for this work and IGEM’s statutory role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Emergency Management SAP (Emergency Management Victoria 2015), which includes actions relating to the development and implementation of EMCOP, this action will be closed.

Finding

IGEM considers this action to be closed.
**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.

**Implementation actions**

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<tr>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13(a) Review state of disaster provisions in the <em>Emergency Management Act 1986</em> (EM Act) to introduce a graded scale of emergencies</td>
<td>31/12/2012</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13(b) Amend the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) based on amendments to the EM Act re: state of disaster</td>
<td>31/12/2012</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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</table>

13(a) Review state of disaster provisions in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (EM Act) to introduce a graded scale of emergencies

EMV prepared a discussion paper on a graded scale of emergency declarations and received feedback from the State Crisis and Resilience Council (SCRC) Capability and Response Sub-committee.

The feedback revealed differing and opposing views about the rationale for a graded scale of emergency declarations. Overall, EMV reported no support for changing the existing state of disaster provisions or declaration of emergency area provisions.

Based on the feedback received and the research undertaken to prepare the discussion paper, EMV has advised that the review has concluded and no legislative amendment is being pursued.

EMV advises that while the prospect of further consideration has not been completely dismissed, there is currently no plan to introduce a graded scale of emergency declarations. It is noted however, that the state of disaster provisions will be revisited as part of the transition of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

**Finding**
IGEM considers this action to be closed.

13(b) Amend the State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) based on amendments to the EM Act re: state of disaster

The State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) is the primary document for emergency response in Victoria. The SERP outlines the arrangements for a coordinated response to emergencies by all agencies with a role or responsibility in emergency response.

The SERP was recently reviewed by EMV, in collaboration with representatives from across government. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the SERP adequately explained the arrangements for managing major emergencies, aligned with legislation, reflected current practice and was written using contemporary language.

The amended SERP was approved by SCRC, as a whole of government document, on 23 March 2016. It will take effect on 1 August 2016. In the lead-up to the amended SERP taking effect, existing SERP arrangements remain in place.

Given the outcomes of the EMV’s review of the need for a graded scale of emergencies in Victoria (as per Action 13(a)), a graded scale of emergencies has not been included as part of the amended SERP.

**Finding**
IGEM considers this action to be closed.

**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.

**Implementation actions**

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22(i) Standardise interconnections of radio networks between CFA and DEPI</td>
<td>30/6/2014*</td>
<td>Complete</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>Closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor reporting date

(Image: Parks Victoria)
22(i) Standardise interconnections of radio networks between CFA and DEPI

CFA and DELWP (previously DEPI) have, for some time, been able to communicate on analogue radio channels.

The Regional Mobile Radio Command Communications (RMRCC) program enhances the interconnection of radio networks between CFA and DELWP by providing a single, statewide, digital radio command communications network that may be used by any agency equipped with radios compatible with Regional Mobile Radio (RMR).

On 25 June 2015, the infrastructure program associated with RMRCC was delivered. This included the completion of the channel (base stations) for RMRCC, power and air conditioning upgrade works, and completion of the talk group enablement works.

CFA advised that the standardised radio network interconnections are now in place between CFA and DELWP, and that all CFA radios have been programmed with the 194 talk groups that allow access to the new RMRCC.

Completion of the console solution and associated connectivity into Incident Control Centres is required for the RMRCC program to be fully commissioned and to allow CFA to commence using the command channels on the RMR network.

The console solution allows voice traffic from command talk groups across the state to be connected to Incident Control Centres for use by Incident Controllers and Incident Management Teams. The solution will also introduce flexibility by allowing for local command talk groups to be ‘patched’ together to form tactical talk groups that can cover the entire area of an incident.

CFA is awaiting the outcomes of the Regional and Incident Control Centre Investment Strategy being undertaken by EMV before finalising the scope of work required for the console solution and associated connectivity. At this stage, there is no timeframe for completion of this work.

IGEM comment

CFA and DELWP currently have the ability to respond collectively to an incident using analogue, or in some cases, digital radio channels, as part of the existing radio network.

IGEM considers the intended outcome of this action has been met and notes the significant progress being made in further enhancing and standardising the interconnections of radio networks between CFA, DELWP and other agencies as part of the RMRCC project.

IGEM notes that the Emergency Management Operational Communications Plan (EMOCP), endorsed by the Minister for Emergency Services in August 2015, will continue to guide enhancements to the radio networks across all agencies, including CFA and DELWP. Implementation of the EMOCP is an action under the Emergency Management SAP (Emergency Management Victoria 2015), and as such will be monitored by IGEM.

The March 2016 EMOCP program status update\(^2\) notes that work is underway to transition agencies including, but not limited to, VICSES and Life Saving Victoria, to the RMR and in some cases the Metropolitan Mobile Radio (MMR) networks.

Finding

IGEM considers this action to be complete.

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

The Victorian Government allocated $21.5 million to the Department of Sustainability and Environment (now DELWP) in 2010 to develop and enhance fire information systems and upgrade existing tools such as FireWeb.

This work was performed under the Bushfire Information Communication Technology (BICT) project originally due for completion in October 2014. The project was delayed due to vendor delivery not aligning with departmental needs and budgetary constraints, resulting in a program review.

The project was renamed the Emergency Management Information System (EMIS) program to reflect an all-hazards, rather than bushfire, focus.

DELWP has reported the following progress in relation to the remaining program projects: Infrastructure, eWeb, and Fuel Management System.

Infrastructure

The Infrastructure project underpins delivery of the EMIS (formerly BICT) program to meet the VBRC recommendations.

It provides the platform to support applications such as FireWeb, eMap and the new applications.

BICT Cloud Migration

The BICT Cloud Migration moved all current applications into the cloud-based Emergency Zone. This allowed the decommissioning of CenITex and DELWP hardware infrastructure which was at the end of its service life.

DELWP reports this project as complete.

Fire and Emergency Management Portal – eWeb

The eWeb will provide:

- a consolidated operating picture of emergency management information through a web-based portal
- an environment for role-based display of emergency management applications and information enabling staff to view all relevant information pertaining to their assignments
- a single point of access and authentication to all DELWP web-based systems to manage bushfires
- a portal with security and role-based authority capabilities necessary to access EMIS-developed applications.

This project will facilitate the replacement and decommissioning of FireWeb, once remaining FireWeb content and applications are migrated to eWeb and other EMIS projects are completed.

Completion of the eWeb build is expected by late 2016 with business deployment to be aligned with other EMIS project initiatives and business priorities following system and user acceptance testing.

Fuel Management System

DELWP has developed a Fuel Management System (FMS) to replace the Burns and Works module within FireWeb.

The FMS is designed to support the Fuel Management Program and the transition to a risk-based approach that includes, but is not limited to, community engagement and risk assessment.

Release 1.0 of the FMS was completed in March 2016. DELWP has plans for subsequent releases throughout 2016 to improve usability, provide additional functionality, and to implement changes to business processes as a result of findings from the Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire (State Government of Victoria 2015a).

DELWP plans to begin a phased implementation of FMS in August 2016, with FMS to have fully replaced the Burns and Works module by April 2017.

IGEM comment

DELWP has advised IGEM that the EMIS program will end in June 2016 with the final stages of EMIS projects transitioning to business as usual.

IGEM notes the completion of the Infrastructure project and the imminent completion of the eWeb and FMS projects. IGEM also notes that such projects continue to evolve to incorporate new systems and work practices, for example, as a result of the Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire (State Government of Victoria 2015a).

IGEM considers this action to be closed and will no longer monitor progress.

Finding

IGEM considers this action to be closed.

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:

- the progressive replacement of all SWER (single-wire earth return) powerlines 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
- 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.

Implementation action

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>27(d) Targeted work program for distribution businesses to reduce bushfire risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ix) Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) considers new standards for powerline construction in highest bushfire risk areas</td>
<td>30/06/2016</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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</table>

27(d)(ix) Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) considers new standards for powerline construction in highest bushfire risk areas

ESV has continued to work closely with Victorian electrical distribution businesses and the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program (PBSP) group within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), to develop new standards for network operations in the highest bushfire risk areas.

ESV advises that new standards include both the adoption of existing construction standards replacing bare-wired conductors with insulated conductors and the adoption of new technologies that reduce the risk from remaining bare-wired powerlines in the highest bushfire risk areas.

On 1 May 2016, amendments were made to the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations which specify new standards for powerline construction by major electricity companies in the highest bushfire risk areas. The amendments adopt a policy of replacing bare-wire powerlines at the end of their lives or on augmentation.

The Regulatory Impact Statement which accompanied the proposed regulatory amendments estimated that, on average, powerlines in the target areas would be replaced within 25 years.
Specifically, the amended regulations specify:

- a total of 33 electric line construction areas in which the enhanced design standards apply
- that the enhanced standards apply to all electric lines with a nominal voltage between 1 kV and 22 kV which are constructed or substantially replaced within those electric line construction areas
- that the design standard for powerlines in the electric line construction areas be either those using a covered conductor or be an underground electric line
- that the details of the processes and procedures related to these new requirements be included in the major electricity companies’ Bushfire Mitigation Plans, required to be submitted to ESV for acceptance.

These changes to regulatory requirements are in addition to the $200 million government funded replacement of bare conductors in the same electric line construction areas, which is being administered by DEDJTR under the Powerline Replacement Fund program.

The amended regulations also specify requirements for the installation of Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter devices across a wider area of Victoria. Over the next seven years, these are expected to further reduce the risk from the remaining bare-wired powerlines.

ESV is currently working closely with major electricity companies and their implementation committees on the implementation of the amended regulations.

To provide oversight and support administration of the amended regulations, ESV will form an independent committee under the provisions contained in the Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005.

**IGEM comment**

The objective of the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Regulations 2016 (1 May 2016) is to amend the 2013 Regulations to make provision for requirements for major electricity companies to increase safety standards on specific components of their networks in order to reduce bushfire risk.

IGEM considers that, in light of the implementation of the amended regulations and work being done under the PBSP and Powerline Replacement Fund Program, the intent of this action has been met.

**Finding**

IGEM considers this action complete.
Recommendation 49
The State modify its adoption of the Building Code of Australia for the following purposes:

- to remove deemed-to-satisfy provisions for the construction of buildings in BAL-FZ (the Flame Zone)
- 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
- 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.

Implementation actions

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>49(h) Amend Building Regulations 2006 to adopt performance requirements</td>
<td>31/03/2012</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

49(i) Develop guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings

Development of the guidelines under this action is contingent on the outcome of Action 49(h).

The VBA has advised that, once the amendment of Building Regulations 2006 is completed, it will commence research and drafting of the guidelines in consultation with relevant experts.

The VBA estimates that it may take up to six months from release of the amended regulations to develop and publish the guidelines for retrofitting class 9 buildings.

Finding
This action is contingent on the completion of Action 49(h). IGEM will continue to monitor.

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.

Implementation actions

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<tr>
<td>56(d) Increased planned burning to 390,000 ha</td>
<td>30/06/2014*</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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56(f) Identify changes required to effectively and efficiently achieve the target planned burn

The implementation progress of Actions 56(d) and 56(f) are linked and reported together.

56(d) Increased planned burning to 390,000 ha

56(f) Identify changes required to effectively and efficiently achieve the target planned burn

DELWP reported that for 2015–16, a target of 275,000 hectares remained in place.

As of 30 June 2016, 184,847 hectares had been treated with planned burning. A further 13,247 hectares had been treated with mechanical means.
IGEM’s Review of Performance Targets for Bushfire Fuel Management on Public Land

In 2015, the Victorian Government sought recommendations from IGEM on the most effective form of performance target for the bushfire fuel management program on public land. Specifically, IGEM was asked to consider whether it would be more effective to continue with a hectare-based target or to adopt a risk-reduction target.

IGEM’s Review of Performance Targets for Bushfire Fuel Management on Public Land (IGEM 2015) recommended a risk reduction target as the most effective form of performance target for bushfire fuel management on public land. The Government accepted this recommendation, and has set a target of using fuel management on public land to maintain statewide bushfire risk at or below 70 per cent. This target takes effect as of 1 July 2016.

Safer Together: A New Approach to Reducing the Risk of Bushfire in Victoria

In November 2015, the Government released Safer Together: A New Approach to Reducing the Risk of Bushfire in Victoria (State Government of Victoria 2015b) in response to the IGEM’s review of performance targets for bushfire fuel management on public land. Safer Together sets out a suite of priorities and actions directed toward delivering a bushfire management approach to reduce bushfire risk. This includes a move to a risk reduction target for fuel management on public land. This target is included in the 2016–17 Victorian Budget and was scheduled to take effect on 1 July 2016.

IGEM comment

IGEM notes that DELWP will continue to report on hectares of land treated as part of the Bushfire Fuel Management Program. However, the amount of land treated each year will be determined based on what is needed to deliver risk reduction outcomes.

The government will not target increasing planned burning to a specific output level in terms of hectares.

Finding

IGEM considers these actions to be closed.

Recommendation 59

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (now DELWP) amend the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land in order to achieve the following:

- provide a clear statement of objectives, expressed as measurable outcomes
- include an explicit risk-analysis model for more objective and transparent resolution of competing objectives, where human life is the highest priority
- specify the characteristics of fire management zones – including burn size, percentage area burnt within the prescribed burn, and residual fuel loading
- adopt the use of the term ‘bushfire’ rather than wildfire.

Implementation action

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<th>ACTION REQUIRED</th>
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<tr>
<td>59(b) Amend operational manuals and guides and advise all staff</td>
<td>01/12/2012</td>
<td>Closed</td>
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</table>

59(b) Amend operational manuals and guides and advise all staff

Following the revision of the 2012 Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land, the former Department of Sustainability and Environment (now DELWP) proceeded to update six fire management manuals (Response, Preparedness, Prevention, Fuel Management, Recovery, and Occupational Health and Safety).

Amendment of DELWP’s fire management manuals involved creating a new document control system, completing the architecture of new manuals, establishing a governance process, and prioritising the revision process in accordance with the areas of higher risk.

As manuals or sections of manuals are approved, they are immediately published on FireWeb, therefore becoming available to DELWP and Networked Emergency Organisations (Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicForests), EMV and CFA.

DELWP has reported progress of the manuals as follows:

- Response (completed on 8 December 2014)
- Preparedness (expected completion by June 2016)
- Prevention (expected completion June 2016)
- Fuel Management (completed 29 June 2016)
- Recovery (expected completion date not reported)
- Occupational Health and Safety (closed).

Response Manual

The Response manual was approved by the Chief Fire Officer on 8 December 2014 and has been published on FireWeb.

Maintenance of the Response manual has included a new instruction and a new checklist for initial response in very high tree hazard areas and a revised instruction on fire reporting.

Preparedness and Prevention Manuals

Preparation of the Preparedness and Prevention manuals are well advanced. DELWP reports that all key sections of these manuals will be completed by the end of June 2016.

Fuel Management Manual

The Fuel Management Manual has been redrafted entirely since May 2014 to ensure alignment of key improvements in DELWP processes including: Strategic Bushfire Management Plans, Operational Planning, Tactical Planning, and Delivery, including technical improvements in field operations.

The manual was approved by the Chief Fire Officer in August 2015 and was originally planned to come into effect on 2 November 2015. However, as a result of the
Lancefield-Cobaw fire, the Chief Fire Officer postponed the effective date until completion of the *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire* (State Government of Victoria 2015a). This would allow for any further changes to be made to the manual before implementation.

DELWP has engaged an independent risk expert to review and assess the Fuel Management manual against the ISO standards and the recommendations from the *Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire* (State Government of Victoria 2015a). Principles from *Safer Together* (State Government of Victoria 2015b) have also been incorporated.

The Fuel Management manual was approved on 29 June 2016 and comes into effect on 1 August 2016.

**Recovery Manual**

DELWP has advised that the Recovery Manual will be part of the Recovery Framework project which is commencing in the 2016–17 financial year.

**Occupational Health and Safety Manual**

This manual will not proceed as a stand-alone manual, instead each of the other manuals will contain a section on safety that complements existing corporate occupational health and safety material.

**IGEM comment**

IGEM notes that the amendment of operational manuals is an iterative process, governed by changes to operational policy and processes and considers this work to be part of business as usual.

**Finding**

IGEM considers this action to be closed.
7 Concluding remarks

As only two actions remain ongoing, IGEM will not provide a further progress report in 2017.

Instead, IGEM will continue to monitor the progress of Actions 49(h) and 49(i), which remain significantly overdue, and report directly to the minister when they are complete.

As noted earlier, IGEM’s monitoring and assurance responsibilities not only include the implementation of actions from VBRC, but also extend to monitoring implementation of actions from the Emergency Management SAP, the 2014 and 2015–16 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry Reports, and the Independent Investigation of the Lancefield-Cobaw Fire (State Government of Victoria 2015a).

Many of these actions share a common theme and intent and IGEM will continue to monitor their implementation to help assure government and the community in respect of the emergency management arrangements in Victoria and foster continuous improvement.

IGEM will adopt an approach to monitoring and reporting that ensures progress is reported holistically and the administrative burden on lead agencies and departments is minimised.

The Inspector-General expresses his appreciation to representatives from the lead agencies for their participation and assistance in the preparation of this report.
8 References


