



## 10 COMMUNITY WELLBEING

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<b>Item</b>	10.3
<b>Subject</b>	Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program - Periodic Report
<b>Presented by</b>	Clare Danby, Community Recovery Resilience and Preparedness Officer Liz Hull, Community Recovery Resilience and Preparedness Officer

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### ALIGNMENT WITH DELIVERY PROGRAM

(CW) COMMUNITY WELLBEING

(CW.4) We are connected, safe and healthy with a strong sense of community

(CW.4.3) We have the programs, services and infrastructure to ensure a safe community

(CW.4.3.0) We have the programs, services and infrastructure to ensure a safe community - Other Activities

### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Notes recent progress and achievements in the delivery of the Bellingen Shire Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Preparedness program
2. Notes progress on the implementation of the Grants programs.
3. Notes experience from Council's March/April 2021 Flood Response and the role of Council's Preparedness, Recovery and Resilience Officers in this.
4. Notes the content and outputs of Council's Community Resilience workshop on 7 May 2021.
5. Notes plans to ensure on-going program management of the final year of the Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Resilience Program.
6. Endorses the budget adjustments as outlined in the Budget section of this report.
7. Notes upcoming priorities for the delivery of the Bellingen Shire Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Preparedness program
8. Notes that any changes endorsed in this meeting will be submitted to the NSW Office of Local Government for approval.
9. Notes that a quarterly report on the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program was submitted in April 2021 to the NSW Office of Local Government.
10. Notes that a final acquittal report accounting for \$100,000 funding from the Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery Fund was submitted in March 2020.
11. Notes that a grant application to the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund for \$300,000 for the Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire was successful and will commence 1 July 2021.
12. Endorses plans to integrate Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire activities as well as any other funded activities into this program for future reports.
13. Notes the Mid North Coast Joint Organisation's success in securing grants from Adapt NSW (additional scholarships with CSU) and the BCRRF (disaster simulation using SimTable)
14. Notes that the result for a grant application for resilience building to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for \$4,297,347 submitted in January 2021 is anticipated in June 2021.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 27 January 2021, adjustments to the \$1.5M Bellingen Shire Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Preparedness program were approved in resolution 10.1. The program comprises projects across the themes of: Managing Risk; Effective response to and recovery from Emergencies; and Enabling, empowering, and supporting community resilience.

### **1 Progress and Achievements**

Implementation of the program continues to progress well with 21/22 projects now in progress. Expenditure commitments represent more than 75% of the program value and at the end of March 2021, 42% of the program value was spent.

Recent highlights of the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience projects include:

- Activities funded through Community event and Event stimulus grants and Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grants, have started. Events have included Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Committee's Let's Get Together event, the Screenwave International Film Festival 2021 and Bellingen Show 2021.
- The first Charles Sturt University scholarships project for the Mid North Coast Resilience Network is now complete. Celebratory events were held in Port Macquarie and Bellingen. A follow-up MNC JO project offering additional subjects/scholarships is underway.
- Mental Health support street stalls were held in three towns to raise awareness about local mental health services and to provide community information.
- The Community Resilience Deliberative Panel report was endorsed by Council in March 2021 and a community resilience workshop to consider taking forward the panel's recommendations for resilience building took place on 7 May 2021. This event involved members of the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel, members of the Charles Sturt scholarship group and those awarded Empower and Enable grants (Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grants).
- The soft launch and promotion of the Bellingen Shire Community Directory
- Deepened community consultation led by Fisher Design and Architecture for the Bellingen Shire Branding Project and the adaptation of this project to involve Bellingen Shire's indigenous school students in developing branding design elements.

## **2 Grants**

### *Community Events grants*

13 event organisers were awarded grants. To date, grants have been allocated to 10 of 13 events with five events having now completed. The remaining events are scheduled to take place before the end of January 2022.

### *Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grants*

70 grants were awarded in early February 2021. Of these 50 have now completed paperwork and received grant transfers. 13 grantees are still being processed.

## **3 Flood Response**

The active involvement of LGA based Community Resilience Officers in flood recovery efforts was endorsed by Resilience NSW just prior to the March 2021 floods event. Bellingen Shire Resilience Officers and Customer Service staff in Dorrigo worked as part of the Bellingen Shire Council floods incident team from 19 March. A series of landslips closed Waterfall Way for two and a half weeks impacting a high number of our community.

## **4 Community Resilience Workshop**

Members of the community with an interest in community resilience, demonstrated by participation in the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel, the Charles Sturt University Scholarships or Assist and Empower Grants, joined a workshop and celebration organised by

Council on 7 May 2021. The workshop aimed to enable networking and collaboration, identify strategies for broader community representation and to identify initial steps for taking forward funded resilience related activities. The discussion focused on a community assets assessment, systems for coordination, community awareness and education relating to resilience and Bellingen Shire recovery planning.

Feedback on the process was positive with participants keen to see the activities actioned. Smaller groups of committed individuals will convene in May and June 2021 to define these processes in more detail. A key focus will be ensuring that those who aren't currently included in discussions are drawn into the process.

## **5 Program funding reallocations**

A project allocation of \$100,000 was made in the program for the implementation of the Community Resilience recommendations (see line T of the Proposed allocations as attached with this report). The full definition of this project awaited the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel's recommendations. In the period between the community resilience deliberative panel and the presentation of the report, Council applied for a grant which incorporated some of the recommended activities. Following Council's endorsement of the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel's report in March 2021, the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program Working Group has now specified appropriate Community Resilience project activities and gained funding in excess of \$100K for some of this activity via the BCRRF funding (see section 3.7 of the report detail).

The \$113,000 proposed for reallocation is drawn from \$100,000 from the Community Resilience Panel Recommendation project, \$11,000 from the Disaster Response Pilot contingency project (as COVID-19 vaccine roll out is now in progress and the risk has further reduced) and \$2,000 from the Food Resilience project, due to budget underspend from the November Food Safety and Resilience Event.

Reallocation of the amount of \$113,000 is proposed as follows:

*\$54,000 to Program Coordination and the development of Council's community communication channels.* The 1.2FTE Preparedness, Recovery and Resilience role was initially defined and contracted for one year (to June 2021) as disaster relief funding was awarded for this timeframe. This funding is now extended to June 2022 and projects have reoriented to this timeframe. Community feedback has demonstrated that this role has been valued, particularly in disaster coordination. The deliberative panel on Community Resilience recommended that Council adopt a broader range of communication channels, including social media. This reallocation will enable 0.6FTE to continue to oversee the program and enable a more active program presence on social media and other channels in sharing activities across the program events and learning from the community grants scheme.

*\$10,000 to Emergency Information for Dorrigo Heliport.* Early consultation on the allocations of Bushfire disaster relief funds identified Dorrigo Heliport as a priority. The Heliport was proposed to the Bushfire Grants projects and \$15K was allocated but the budget for this project is higher. This additional allocation fills the gap in funding to ensure that this important community safety resource is completed.

*\$13,200 to Assist and Empower Grants for grants monitoring and administration.* The time taken to administer the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience grants has been greater than anticipated due to the complexity of individual grant adjustments and contracting processes. At key points in the project cycle, these grants will require scrutiny and support to grantees. This allocation will enable

high quality and available support to community grantees.

*\$28,000 to Bellingen Shire Recovery and Resilience Centre (Urunga) - building renovation.* The ex-RFS building in Urunga was bequeathed for community use and requires just a few adjustments to be functional for community use. Community organisations have expressed interest in having a location from which community recovery coordination can be organized, when needed and as a location to host resilience building activities.

*\$7,800 contribution to the North Coast Tourism Symposium.* This symposium involves 14 LGAs on the North Coast and includes a series of special awards to individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to community or business during the natural disasters and pandemic experienced over the last twelve months. Local businesses are also sponsoring this event.

## **6 Program Staffing**

1.2FTE were contracted to oversee the Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Preparedness program to June 2021, funded via the Disaster Recovery Funding. One of the 2 Officers undertaking this work (0.6FTE) has resigned and will finish by mid-June 2021 in line with current program funding commitments. The role description is being reviewed for early recruitment of 0.6FTE if reallocations in this report are endorsed (as outlined in section 5 above), to oversee the next 12 months of this ongoing program. Separate funding has been secured via the BCRRF grant (see section 7 below) for another 0.6FTE officer position which will focus on delivering those specific grant projects from July 2021 to June 2023.

## **7 Upcoming priorities**

In the coming months, the following areas have been identified as priorities for program implementation:

- Completion of Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Grants contract processes.
- Workshops to enable mutual learning and collaboration between grantees in the Bellingen Shire towns.
- The design and implementation of the Water Resilience Deliberative Panel.
- Finalisation of the Alternative Routes report and consultation process.
- Procurement for the Food Resilience Project to define a community food vision and plan.
- Project planning for the Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire project
- Advocacy to secure a long-term Community Resilience Officer for Bellingen Shire.
- Vegetation mapping project commencement.
- Recruitment of replacement 0.6FTE Preparedness, Recovery and Resilience Officer.

## **7 Funders and funding**

Regular quarterly reports for \$1,225,000 of Disaster Relief Funding are submitted quarterly to Resilience NSW. The latest report was submitted in April 2021.---

The final acquittal report accounting for \$100,000 funding of Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery Funds was submitted in March 2021. This funding supported most of the Pandemic Response COVID-19 Pilot, work on food resilience and part of the cost of the Deliberative Panel on Community Resilience. The allocations to this funding were adjusted to ensure that the grant was fully utilized.

A grant application to the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund administered by Resilience NSW for \$300,000 was successful. This project will commence 1 July 2021 for two years. The project is entitled Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire. The project includes a community assets assessment, community education and awareness raising about resilience, community recovery planning, community coordination systems for resilience and disaster response, a joint risk assessment with Coffs Harbour, project staffing and

communications support, a program evaluation, and support for the Neighbourhood Care Network. This funding includes 0.6FTE to lead the activities for the next 2 years.

For future representation of Bellingen Shire's resilience work, this report recommends that, from its start in July 2021, the Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire project (and other future projects) be integrated into the overall Bushfire Recovery and Resilience program framework.

The Mid North Coast Joint Organisation secured grants from Adapt NSW (additional scholarships with CSU) and the BCRRF (disaster simulation using SimTable). Opportunities to apply for new scholarships have already been offered to members of the community and staff. The SimTable will provide a powerful resource for modelling the impact of disaster events given the topography, rivers, towns and characteristics of Bellingen Shire.

A grant application for resilience building in Bellingen Shire was made to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for approximately \$4m (January 2021). Results are expected in June 2021.

## **8 Recognition**

Bellingen Shire Council has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Local Government Professional awards for the Community Driven Pandemic Response Group in the Community Partnerships and Disaster Recovery/Emergency Response Management Sections (under 100,000 population) categories. Announcements on these awards are expected in early June 2021.

## **REPORT DETAIL**

### **1. Introduction**

Following the 2019/2020 bushfire season, Bellingen Shire was among the 42 Councils allocated Disaster Recovery funds of \$1,225,000 to respond to the aftermath of the Bushfires. In addition, Bellingen Shire Council was successful in applying for Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery/Tourism grants of \$275,000.

Disaster Recovery Funding was initially awarded in January 2020 with an indicative list of projects being provided in February 2020 and endorsed by Council by resolution 8.1 of 3 April 2020. The amended program was endorsed by Council resolution 10.1 at the Extraordinary General Meeting of Council on 29 July 2020 and these changes were agreed by the OLG in November 2020.

Council resolution 10.1 of 29 July 2020 endorsed the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience program comprising 22 projects across the themes of: Managing Risk (6 projects) \$345 000; Effective response to and recovery from Emergencies (8 projects) \$672 000 and Enabling, empowering, and supporting community resilience (8 projects) \$483 000. The program's list of projects is provided in the attachment.

Council resolution 10.1 of 27 January 2021 endorsed adjustments of \$47 000 between projects. The total program value was not changed.

The Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program Working Group was established in July 2020 with seven (staff) members overseeing program implementation. Project charters for projects were prepared and approved and key members of council staff were appointed as project managers.

### **2. Program overview**

The attached program allocations report provides an overview of the program and details project purpose as well as key activities delivered. It also details justifications for proposed budget changes to individual projects. At the end of each of the three program areas, the overall percentage change in budget arising from this proposed change, is provided.

#### **3.1 Achievements**

Implementation of the program continues to progress well with 21/22 projects now in progress. Expenditure commitments represent more than 75% of the program value and at the end of March 2021, 42% of the program value has been spent.

Highlights of the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience projects between February and April 2021 include:

- Activities funded through Community event and Event stimulus grants and Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grants, have started.
- The Dorrigo Suicide Prevention Committee's Let's Get Together event drew hundreds of local residents for a free sunny day of music, information and interaction, whilst Waterfall Way was closed. Visitors were provided with an excellent event bag filled with resources relating to mental health, preventative health and disaster preparedness.
  - The Screenwave International Film Festival 2021 took place in April in Coffs Harbour's Jetty Theatre and CHEC theatre. Bellingen residents were the highest attendees per capita despite the festival's absence from Memorial Hall in 2021. The film festival was the most popular yet with Jack Thompson, the Festival patron, attending on several occasions. Besides the Slow Down Bellingen tourism film, there were short snippets of the Bushfire Program's Get Ready film shown to raise awareness about home preparedness and the disaster dashboard.
  - Bellingen Show took place on 8 and 9 May 2021. The show was very well attended with a sunny first day's numbers exceeding those in previous years. Celebrity chefs, the biggest mobile climbing wall, the ever-popular pavilion, the cattle and horses, created an atmosphere of celebration and recovery.
- The first Charles Sturt University scholarships project for the Mid North Coast Resilience Network is now complete. Celebratory events were held in Port Macquarie in late February and Bellingen in May. The JO's follow-up project is offering additional scholarships for 20 modules for community members and staff as well as sponsorship for the implementation of one course related project in each LGA.
- Mental Health support street stalls were held in three towns to raise awareness about local mental health services, housing and to provide community information. The stalls were prepared by Bellingen Shire's Community Planning Officer alongside representatives from the local communities, Lifeline and Mission Australia.
- The Community Resilience Deliberative Panel report was endorsed by Council in March 2021 and a community resilience workshop to consider taking forward the panel's recommendations for resilience building took place on 7 May 2021. This event involved members of the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel, members of the Charles Sturt scholarship group and those awarded Empower and Enable grants (Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grants).
- Fisher Design and Architecture has organized a broad and deep consultation process about the Bellingen Shire Branding Project. A full consultation process led to multiple engagements with indigenous community members. As a result of these engagements, the project process was adapted to enable the active involvement of Bellingen Shire's indigenous school students in the development of design elements to contribute to branding concepts.

### **3.2 Community Grants**

#### *Community Event Grants*

Through the Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant Program, Council provided an opportunity for event organisers across the Shire to access grants through the Event Sponsorship

and Event Stimulus Grant Program. This funding is for local events that help to stimulate visits and increases to the visitor economy through their events. Across the two events programs, 13 were awarded grants. Grants have been allocated to 10 of the 13 events with five events having now taken place. The remainder of the events are scheduled before the end of January 2022.

### *Disaster Recovery and Resilience Grant Programs*

#### Get Ready Grant Stream

- 36 grants offered
- 2 withdrawn/did not take up offer
- 30 recipients have received their grant payments to undertake the project
- 5 pending the return of the appropriate documentation

#### Get Together Grant Stream

- 8 grants offered
- 6 recipients have received their grants
- 2 pending the return of the appropriate documentation

#### Assist & Empower Grant Stream

- 20 grants offered
- 14 recipients have received their grants
- 6 pending the return of the appropriate documentation

### **3.3 Floods response**

The active involvement of LGA based Community Resilience Officers in flood recovery efforts was endorsed by Resilience NSW just prior to the March 2021 floods event. Bellingen Shire Resilience Officers and Customer Service staff in Dorrigo worked as part of the Bellingen Shire Council floods incidence team from 19 March 2021. A series of landslips closed Waterfall Way for two and a half weeks.

Staff members worked to share and gather current information by

- Hosting street stalls outside IGA in Bellingen and Dorrigo where Council staff talked to more than 300 people and business representatives.
- Posting roads and floods information via Facebook. Resilience@Belloshire reached more than 9000 people during the flood impact period. There were more than 2400 post engagements during this time.
- Coordination with other local organisations to ensure a coherent response and the regular exchange of information through regular meetings. This group included the three shire Chambers of Commerce, the Neighbourhood Care Network (NCN), Red Cross, Neighbourhood Centres of Bellingen Shire. NCN distributed regular SMS flood and roads updates with more than 550 residents. A review of this cooperation took place on 18 May 2021, feeding into future practice.
- Developing and issuing a flood impact survey to ascertain the particular impact experienced locally. Analysing and sharing this information back with the community and with Resilience NSW.
- Maintaining a repository of information for Floods recovery support on the <https://www.bellingenshireconnects.com.au/> website.
- Updating the Bellingen Shire Disaster Dashboard with current recovery information. This recovery update has now been applied across other Shire Disaster Dashboards. During the March/April floods, the dashboard provided an up-to-date information source for residents to consider and assist them make better informed decisions. From Thursday 17 March to Friday 26 March the Bellingen Shire Dashboard recorded 17,800 page views.

- Coordinating with Resilience NSW and participating in a joint LEMC (local emergency management committee) incident recovery committee in Coffs Harbour.
- Contributing to Council's internal incident response processes and the generation of learning through a post incident implementation review. The review created recommendations relating to regular disaster dashboard updating, internal communications and daily internal briefings.

### 3.4 Community Resilience Workshop

The Community Resilience Deliberative Panel took place on the 13 November 2020. 25 panelists made recommendations to Councillors on 14 November 2020 and a report on proceedings was finalised by the University of Newcastle at the end of January 2021. A Council report on the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel was presented and endorsed in resolution in March 2020. The report outlined Council's plans for the progression of the recommendations.

To follow up promptly on the report, members of the community with a demonstrated interest in community resilience (including Community Resilience Deliberative Panel members, the Charles Sturt University Scholars and Assist and Empower Grantees) were invited to join a workshop and celebration organized by Council on 7 May 2021. The workshop aimed to enable networking and collaboration, identify strategies for broader community representation and to identify initial steps for taking forward funded resilience related activities. The discussion focused on activities that form part of the new Building sustainable community resilience in Bellingen Shire (BCRRF) grant (see section 3.7 for funding details):

- Community assets assessment – this activity draws directly from the recommendations of the Deliberative Panel that called for Council to support the network of organisations, interest groups, community groups and others to link, share resources and communicate.
- Coordination systems – this activity is closely linked to the community assets assessment, relying on clear systems to ensure that the knowledge and concerns of groups and communities in relation to resilient, including disaster resilience, are heard and represented.
- Bellingen Shire recovery planning – how does Bellingen Shire want to organize and mobilise when disasters happen. There are so many community assets available locally, but how can we be clear about who does what, and when.
- Community education and awareness for resilience – how can we make sure that we have the knowledge and confidence to prepare for and support our communities to prepare?

Feedback on the process was positive with participants keen to see these activities actioned. Smaller groups of committed individuals will convene in May and June 2021 to define these processes in more detail. A key focus will be ensuring that those who aren't currently included in discussions are drawn into the process.

### 3.5 Program Staffing

Many of the LGAs most heavily impacted by 2019/2020 Bushfires have been supported with a Community Recovery Officer (CRO), funded by NSW Resilience. Bellingen Shire **did not** receive one of those funded positions. Those positions, originally appointed for one year, have now been extended to the end of 2021. With the impact of widespread floods, Resilience NSW endorsed the diversion of these CRO resources from a Bushfire focus to work on the floods. In Bellingen Shire, the Resilience Officers worked on the Flood response/recovery, although grant funded. Bellingen Shire Council is lobbying for the allocation of a funded recovery position for the Shire to ensure the on-going capacity of Council to support community recovery following disasters.

1.2FTE were contracted to oversee the Bushfire Recovery, Resilience and Preparedness



program to June 2021, funded via the Disaster Recovery Funding. One of the 2 Officers undertaking this work (0.6FTE) has resigned and will finish by mid-June 2021 in line with current program funding commitments. The role description is being reviewed for early recruitment of 0.6FTE if reallocations in this report are endorsed (as outlined in the Budget section of this report), to oversee the next 12 months of this ongoing program. Separate funding has been secured via the BCRRF grant (see section 3.7 below) for another 0.6FTE officer position which will focus on delivering those specific grant projects from July 2021 to June 2023.

### **3.6 Program priorities for the upcoming quarter**

- Completion of Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Grants contract processes.
- Workshops to enable mutual learning and collaboration between grantees in the Bellingen Shire towns.
- The design and implementation of the Water Resilience Deliberative Panel.
- Finalisation of the Alternative Routes report and consultation process.
- Procurement for the Food Resilience Project to define a community food vision and plan.
- Project planning for the Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire project.
- Advocacy to secure a long-term Community Resilience Officer for Bellingen Shire.
- Vegetation mapping project start.
- Recruitment of replacement 0.6FTE Preparedness, Recovery and Resilience Officer.

### **3.7 Funders and funding**

Regular quarterly reports for \$1 225 000 of Disaster Relief Funding are submitted quarterly to Resilience NSW. The latest report was submitted in April 2021.---

The final report accounting for \$100 000 funding of Bushfire Community Resilience and Economic Recovery Funds was submitted in March 2021. This funding supported most of the Pandemic Response COVID-19 Pilot, work on food resilience and part of the cost of the Deliberative Panel on Community Resilience. The allocations to this funding were adjusted to ensure that the grant was fully utilized.

A grant application to the Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) administered by Resilience NSW for \$300,000 was successful. This project will commence 1 July 2021. The project is entitled Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire and includes funding for 0.6FTE to lead this activity to June 2023 (as referred to in section 3.5). The components of this project are outlined in section 3.4.

The Mid North Coast Joint Organisation's secured grants from Adapt NSW (additional scholarships with CSU) and the BCRRF (disaster simulation using SimTable). Opportunities to apply for new scholarships have already been offered to members of the Bellingen Shire community and staff. The SimTable will provide a powerful resource for modelling the impact of disaster events given the topography, rivers, towns and characteristics of Bellingen Shire.

For future representation of Bellingen Shire's resilience work, this report recommends that, from its start in July 2021, the Building Sustainable Community Resilience in Bellingen Shire project valued at \$300K (and other future projects) be integrated into the overall Bushfire Recovery and Resilience program framework.

A grant application for resilience building in Bellingen Shire was made to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for approximately \$4m (January 2021). Results are expected in June 2021.

### **Local Government Professional awards**

Bellingen Shire Council has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Local Government Professional

awards for the Community Driven Pandemic Response Group in the Community Partnerships and Disaster Recovery/Emergency Response Management Sections (under 100,000 population) categories. Announcements on these awards are expected in early June 2021.

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## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

The program budget has not changed since the January 2021 report - \$1,500,000. Committed expenditure (where purchase orders have been created or in the case of grant, allocations are in progress) is 75% (\$1,061,000).

### **This report proposes reallocation of \$113,000 from the following programs:**

A project allocation of \$100,000 was made in the program for the implementation of the Community Resilience Progression (see line T of the Proposed allocations as attached with this report). The full definition of this project awaited the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel's recommendations. In the period between the community resilience deliberative panel and the presentation of the report, Council applied for a grant which incorporated some of the recommended activities. Following Council's endorsement of the Community Resilience Deliberative Panel's report in March 2021, the Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program Working Group has now specified Community Resilience progression activities and gained funding in excess of \$100K for some of this activity via the BCRRF funding (see section 3.7 of the report detail).

The \$113,000 proposed for reallocation is drawn from \$100,000 from the Community Resilience Progression project, \$11,000 from the Disaster Response Pilot contingency project (as COVID-19 vaccine roll out is now in progress and the risk has further reduced), \$2,000 from the Food Resilience project, due to budget that was unused for the November Food Safety and Resilience Event (as the NSW Department of Primary Industries hosted food and venue costs which was unexpect

### **\$113,000 of Funds are proposed to be reallocated to the following:**

*\$54,000 to Program Coordination and the development of Council's community communication channels.* The 1.2FTE Preparedness, Recovery and Resilience role was initially defined and contracted for one year (to June 2021) as disaster relief funding was awarded for this timeframe. This funding is now extended to June 2022 and projects have reoriented to this timeframe. Community feedback has demonstrated that this role has been valued, particularly in disaster coordination. The deliberative panel on Community Resilience recommended that Council adopt a broader range of communication channels, including social media. This reallocation will enable 0.6FTE of resources to be engaged to continue to oversee the program until the main funding ceases in June 2022. It will also enable a more active program presence on social media and other channels in sharing activities across the program events and learning from the community grants scheme. More information regarding Program Staffing may be found in the Report Detail, section 3.5.

*\$10,000 to Emergency Information for Dorrigo Heliport.* Early consultation on the allocations of Bushfire disaster relief funds identified Dorrigo Heliport as a priority. The Heliport was proposed to the Bushfire Grants projects and was approved an allocation of \$15K, however budget for this project is higher. This additional \$10K allocation fills the gap in funding to ensure that this

important community safety resource is completed.

*\$13,200 to Assist and Empower Grants for grants monitoring and administration.* The time taken to administer the 70 unique Bushfire Recovery and Resilience grants has been greater than anticipated due to the complexity of individual grant adjustments and contracting processes. At key points in the project cycle, these grants will require scrutiny and support to grantees. This allocation will enable high quality and available support to community grantees.

*\$28,000 to Bellingen Shire Recovery and Resilience Centre (Urunga) - building renovation.* The ex-RFS building in Urunga was bequeathed for community use and requires just a few adjustments to be functional for community use. Community organisations have expressed interest in having a location from which community recovery coordination can be organized when needed and as a location to host resilience building activities.

*\$7,800 contribution to the North Coast Tourism Symposium.* This symposium involves 14 LGAs on the North Coast and includes a series of special awards to individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to community or business during the natural disasters and pandemic experienced over the last twelve months. Local businesses are also sponsoring this event.

## **Summary of reallocations**

Reduce budgets from the following projects:

- Disaster Response capacity – reduce by \$11,000
- Food resilience project reduce by \$2,000
- Community Resilience Progression reduce by \$100,000

Increase budgets to the following projects:

- Program Coordination and development of Council's community communication channels increase by \$54,000
- Emergency Information – allocation for Dorrigo Heliport increase by \$10,000
- Assist and Empower Grants – allocation for grants monitoring and administration increase by \$13,200
- NEW project - Bellingen Shire Recovery and Resilience Centre (Urunga) - building renovation - increase by \$28,000
- NEW project - Tourism Symposium - increase by \$7,800

## **Integrated Program**

This report recommends that the new BCRRF project activities and budget be integrated into this Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Program for future reports to Council. The value of the overall program would change to \$1,800,000 for 2021/2022 from July 2021.

Please refer to the report attachment for a summary of the program including the proposed changes.

## **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

In relation to projects that are already being delivered, the program is providing sustainable outcomes in the following areas:

### **Social Benefit**

The Community Grants program will provide on-going social benefit through the implementation of

grants providing social events, supporting community driven project promoting connections and a focus on some of the most vulnerable people in the Shire. Through Get Ready grants, preparedness measures will alleviate stress and reduce the effects of trauma from last year's bushfires.

### **Environmental benefit**

On-going advocacy work for the prioritisation of Fire Access and Fire Trail Management Plans to improve access for RFS to rainforest and koala habitat, and for review of state risk planning policies to prioritise inclusion of a natural asset category, will bring sustainable environmental benefit, if successful.

The vegetation mapping project will make the best available vegetation mapping accessible to Council and the Public and will assist with the management of biodiversity across the shire. A range of community grant applications have an environmental focus such as water conservation land clearance and environmental education and when awarded, these will bring environmental benefit.

### **Economic benefit**

The streetscape project will, through enhancing the appearance of retail precincts across Bellingen Shire, potentially attract new clients and opportunities. Shops provide vibrancy and character for local towns. Shops generate employment, encourage length of stay, increase visitor spend, provide outlets for local producers and establish vital social infrastructure which attracts new residents.

With tourism being one of the Shire's largest economic drivers, a new brand will create a new platform from which to launch and kick start the Shire's visitor economy. A new destination brand can strengthen the Shire's Sense of Place as a community, define our attributes and values and help attract like-minded visitors.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

The Bellingen Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy was adopted by Council at its Meeting 22 February 2012. This strategy is designed to outline the approach Bellingen Shire takes towards engaging with our community.

Having regard to the Community Engagement Strategy it is considered that the actions/initiatives contained within this report are appropriately categorised as having a LEVEL 1 impact (i.e. High impact – Shire wide). To address the requirements of Council's Community Engagement Strategy and the NSW Local Government Act 1993, a workshop was held with the Councillors on 17 April 2019.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Bushfire Program Overview - May 2021