

APPENDIX 5

Previous inquiry recommendations and actions

<i>A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires. House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires (2003)</i>	
<i>Recommendations regarding the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)</i>	
Recommendation	Response to Recommendation
<p>Recommendation 1 The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre establish, as part of its program to implement a single fuel classification system, a national database that provides information on current levels and rates of accumulation of fuel loads that takes into account vegetation type and climate across all tenures of land, including private land where data is available.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre establish, as part of its program to implement a single fuel classification system, standards which take into account local conditions including topography and vegetation type, for determining appropriate dimensions for asset protection zones.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports the intent of these recommendations to develop management tools that will provide better information on current levels and rates of accumulation of fuel loads. The Bushfire CRC has advised that existing Bushfire CRC projects, particularly the fuel accumulation project, have the capacity to establish a framework for the database proposed in the Report's recommendations. Establishment and ongoing maintenance of a national database is an operational rather than a research function and is therefore outside the scope of the Bushfire CRC.</p> <p>A range of tasks which are relevant in the context of this recommendation was jointly assigned to the Augmented Australian Police Ministers' Council and the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council as part of the COAG response to the National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management.</p>

These Councils could further examine financial and other operational issues associated with the establishment and ongoing maintenance of the recommended national database.

The Bushfire CRC will be asked to provide advice to the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council on the possibility of accelerating research into fuel loads and dynamics and the compilation of this data into accessible databases.

The Australian Government agrees that a nationally consistent framework that would allow data on fire regime mapping to be shared between jurisdictions would be a valuable outcome. The framework needs to be developed in the context of the recommendations of the COAG *Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements* Report and the work being undertaken by Geoscience Australia as part of the Disaster Mitigation Australia Package to develop a national risk assessment framework for natural hazards. This framework should include development and provision of models, data and decision support tools.

The Australian Government will continue to develop national consistency in datasets relevant to bushfire mitigation and management under the Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure framework. Geoscience Australia is the lead agency for Spatial Data Management and provides the Australian Spatial Data Directory. Vegetation information (National Forest Inventory and National Vegetation Information System) is another key data set relevant to bushfire mitigation and management. A recent

	<p>application of the National Vegetation Information System has been to link information about vegetation types to fuel loads. The Bureau of Rural Sciences and the Department of the Environment and Heritage are lead agencies on vegetation information.</p> <p>The Bushfire CRC's research will contribute data that would assist in the establishment of standards for determining appropriate dimensions for asset protection zones and the Australian Government requests that it make such data available to those state and territory agencies which have responsibility for establishing those appropriate dimensions. A longer-term goal of the projects in the Bushfire CRC's Program A is to understand better the role of fuel types and topography. The outcome of Project VESTA being undertaken in Western Australia has provided some early results that are being validated by the current Bushfire CRC work plan.</p> <p>It is noted that the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management addresses the issue of data and information relevant to bushfire mitigation and management in Recommendations 5.1-5.4. The Australian Government supports these recommendations.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment These recommendations remain extremely relevant and I understand that such a national database still does not exist.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5 The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government accepts that access is a fundamental</p>

Research Centre determine a minimum national standard, taking into account topography and vegetation type, for adequate access to all public lands including wilderness areas of national parks for the purpose of effective fire prevention and suppression.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre establish a minimum national standard that is common across all tenures of land for water access and availability for bushfire fighting.

issue which all state, territory and local authorities must address. As programs A and B of the Bushfire CRC deal with "Safe prevention, preparation and suppression" and "Management of fire in the landscape", the outcomes of these research projects will be of significant importance in addressing these recommendations. However, the issue of access to lands, including the number, size and maintenance of fire tracks, and the issue of access to water, are not part of any current research plan of the CRC. The Australian Government considers these to be areas for policy action by local, state and territory government rather than areas for research.

The CRC research programs will provide information on the intensity and rate of spread of fires under a range of conditions, which will be important contributions to the access conditions set and implemented by local, state and territory authorities. While the CRC is not a standard setting organisation, its findings on these matters will be of relevance to the appropriate state, territory and local bodies.

Access to Australian Government owned and/or managed lands and national parks is determined by the plan of management for each relevant piece of land. Development of the management plans entails extensive public consultation and input, where appropriate. Plans are designed to protect the full range of assets, including management of risks associated with bushfire and the spread of weeds and disease.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

I understand that a national standard is yet to be developed.

	<p>Recommendation 8 was referred to the states and territories in the Commonwealth's response and the Bushfire CRC was not given the task. I don't believe the states and territories have addressed it but it remains in my view a task that is important to address.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14 The Committee recommends that, as part of its study into improving the effectiveness of prescribed burning, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre establish a national database that includes areas targeted for fuel reduction, the area of fuel reduction achieved based on a specified standard of on ground verification and the season in which the reduction was achieved. The Committee also recommends that in developing this database the Cooperative Research Centre develop a national standard of fire mapping, which accurately maps the extent, intensity, spread and overall pattern of prescribed and wildfires in Australia.</p> <p>Recommendation 15 The Committee acknowledges community concerns about smoke pollution as a result of prescribed burning and recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre pursue its proposed study into smoke modelling.</p>	<p>Government Response While the Bushfire CRC has advised that it recognizes the potential value of a detailed database on fuel reduction, the establishment and maintenance of a national database as proposed in Recommendation 14 is beyond the scope of the currently funded research program of the Bushfire CRC.</p> <p>Important work has been undertaken on fire regime mapping, particularly by the Western Australian Department of Land Information and the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas Management, complemented by the work of the CSIRO and Geoscience Australia to develop the Sentinel system. The Sentinel Fire Mapping website is an internet-based mapping tool designed to provide timely fire location data to emergency service managers across Australia. Satellite information is accessed and processed by the Australian Centre for Remote Sensing, in Geoscience Australia, to provide the key information for the CSIRO-based Sentinel website. The mapping system allows users to identify fire locations that pose a potential risk to communities and property.</p> <p>Standards for fire mapping and database development need to be developed in conjunction with work being undertaken as part of</p>

	<p>the Disaster Mitigation Australia Package to develop a national risk assessment framework for natural hazards. This framework should include development and provision of models, data and decision support tools. The Disaster Mitigation Australia Package was recommended to COAG, along with other reform commitments and recommendations in the COAG report <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i>. In the 2003-04 Budget the Australian Government announced new funding of \$68.5 million over 5 years for the Disaster Mitigation Australia Package. The Australian Government's commitment to the funding was conditional on the states and territories agreeing to the implementation of consistent risk assessment methodologies and a nationally consistent approach to data collection and analysis.</p> <p>The Bushfire CRC has a number of projects relating to smoke and its effects on the community and the fire fighters. The Bushfire CRC's smoke dispersion prediction project is already well advanced.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendation 14 –The CRC did not have funding for this project and while some related work was being done, I don't believe a national database has been prepared.</p> <p>Recommendation 15 –This was a project being undertaken by the CRC which should be completed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16 The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre monitor the effect of grazing on mitigating the</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government agrees in principle to these recommendations and requests that the Bushfire CRC</p>

return of woody weeds to recently fire effected areas across various landscapes including alpine and subalpine.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre conduct further research into the long term effects and effectiveness of grazing as a fire mitigation practice.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre conduct further research on the impact of weeds on the flammability of land and the most economically and environmentally appropriate way to remove weeds after fire events.

specifically address them as part of the work it will undertake with the additional \$3 million recently allocated by the Australian Government; it also understands that grazing has impacts beyond fire mitigation and that these need to be evaluated as a whole by land management agencies in developing grazing policies.

The Australian Government notes that the effect of weeds on the progression of wildfire will be captured under the Bushfire CRC's program looking at the understanding of fuel types.

It is also noted that Australian Governments will continue to implement actions under the National Weeds Strategy (launched June 1997) to eradicate weeds, including as appropriate, weed occurrences following a bushfire event. The Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, through the Australian Weeds Committee of the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Weeds Strategy (refer Recommendation 19).

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

Recommendation 16 – Funding from the Federal Government was subsequently provided (2004) for a project in the Snowy Mountains. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service would not allow access to Kosciuszko National Park for the research therefore research was carried out on private land in the Snowy Plains region which is surrounded by Kosciuszko National Park. Dr Mark Adams leads that research. It is still continuing but it requires further funding and applications to the Federal Government have been unsuccessful as far as I'm aware.

	<p>Recommendations 17 and 18 –Other than the project mentioned in relation to Recommendation 16, I am not aware of any other research in this area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 51</p> <p>The Committee recommends that (under Programs C and E) the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre considers the following items as part of a national education program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing bushfire skills training to schools and libraries. • Training various categories of emergency services personnel on their specific role in the event of a bushfire. • Ensuring that those in the fields of building, engineering, urban planning, forestry and science have a clear understanding of bushfire risk management including current related regulatory codes and legislation. • Counselling prospective land developers in bushfire prone areas on the risks and necessary protective planning. • Running adult education courses on protective planning (including insurance, building design and maintenance and defence techniques) in the context of bushfires. • Broadcasting protective planning issues through the media, television, Internet, radio and publications. • Structuring the community into groups and providing them with guidelines for launching an initial attack on a bushfire. • Enclosing brochures about bushfire protection with rates notices. 	<p>Government Response</p> <p>The Bushfire CRC has advised that it will consider all these items in developing its community education program. The major part of the Bushfire CRC's community education work will seek to enhance and complement the broad range of educational activities presently undertaken by state and territory agencies. The Australian Government is providing the CRC with an additional \$350,000 per annum over three years under the CRC Program to support these activities in regional areas.</p> <p>In part, Recommendation 51 has been addressed by the Prime Minister's announcement on 8 September 2004 of the allocation of \$6 million over three years (\$2 million per annum) towards the establishment of a Bushfire Awareness and Preparedness Day, managed by the Attorney-General's Department.</p> <p>It is noted that the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management addresses the issue of school and community-based education in Recommendation 3.1 and related Finding 3.1. The Australian Government supports this recommendation.</p> <p>The Australian Government notes that COAG has requested that the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a Bushfire Awareness and Preparedness Day (similar to Clean Up Australia Day) where the community is encouraged to undertake risk reduction with local governments coordinating the disposal of hazardous material. 	<p>Youth Affairs consider the implementation of Recommendation 3.1 and report back within 12 months. It has also requested the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to collect and share information on best practice in community bushfire education across jurisdictions in order to assist jurisdictions to adopt appropriate measures, having regard to particular risk factors and local conditions.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Quite a number of these matters have been taken up in various ways including funding for a Bushfire Awareness and Preparedness Day, although I don't believe funding has been ongoing after the initial 3 year funding. Also, the experiences of the Victorian Bushfires indicate that these sorts of education and community awareness programs must continue on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>Recommendation 53 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre's research and recommend property protection products and programs under Program D.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government agrees with this recommendation and notes that the Bushfire CRC advises that it is examining these topics within the broad context of Program C which looks at the social impact and elements of preparedness of communities at risk. The Bushfire CRC's research outcomes on the effectiveness of this and other policies will assist to inform the debate.</p> <p>While the Bushfire CRC is not a testing authority, its work programs are contributing to improved understanding of the scientific basis for establishing codes and standards. The testing of products against fire and building standards is undertaken by</p>

	<p>several organisations such as the CSIRO.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment I understand substantial work was done by the CRC in this area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 59 The Committee recommends that Program E of the Bushfire Cooperative Centre, which is tasked with the development of the next generation of fire researchers and dissemination of the Centre’s work, be tasked further to collect and respond to feedback, particularly from the on ground volunteer levels of fire brigades, on the practicality of its outputs and their future requirements.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports this recommendation and understands that the education program (Program E) of the Bushfire CRC will monitor the perceived effectiveness of all its outputs.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Some work up to a certain level was done in this area.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 11 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seek to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments implements arrangements in which greater flexibility is devolved to local brigade captains in the issuing of permits to burn for fuel reduction and other purposes in the context of local fire management plans.</p> <p>Recommendation 13 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seek to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments seek agreement from the states and territories on the optimisation and implementation of prescribed burning targets and programs to a</p>	<p>Government Response In January 2005 COAG released its response to the <i>National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management</i>.</p> <p>The Australian Government notes that COAG has asked the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council to work together to establish arrangements for sharing information and enhancing approaches to zoning and classification of fuel management areas. The Primary Industries Ministerial Council, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council will also need to be consulted on this work to ensure consistency with approaches for the</p>

degree that is recognised as adequate for the protection of life, property and the environment. The prescribed burning programs should include strategic evaluation of fuel management at the regional level and the results of annual fuel management in each state should be publicly reported and audited.

management of environmental assets. The Augmented Australasian Police Minister's Council has been asked to report back to COAG within 12 months.

With regard to the role of brigade captains, while the proposal in Recommendation 11 is a matter for the states and territories, the Australian Government supports the recommendation and encourages relevant state and territory agencies to act on the recommendation.

The Australian Government is a significant land manager and contributor to national land management policy development and program implementation. The Australian Government recognises the principle that reducing the amount of fuel in a landscape reduces the risks associated with bushfires by the reduction in fire intensity and spread and assisting in suppression of the bushfires.

Prescribed burning regimes need to recognise the priority importance of the protection of life and property as well as the conservation of Australia's biodiversity, especially fauna and flora listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The zoning approach should be implemented on all Australian Government owned and/or managed lands including national parks, and relevant Ministers will be asked to ensure this occurs.

The Australian Government agrees that the evaluation of the effectiveness of fuel reduction in reduction of risk to all assets needs to be given greater emphasis and priority. The Bushfire CRC is undertaking a major long term project on fuel reduction

and fire regimes to optimise risk management of all assets in the landscape.

While noting the COAG National Bushfire Inquiry finding that comparing targeted and actual annual gross area of fuel reduction within a state/region does not necessarily provide a good measure of risk reduction, nevertheless public reporting will assist communities to understand the extent of fuel reduction burning in their regions.

Inappropriate fire regimes (whether too infrequent, too frequent or too intense) can be a major threatening impact to biodiversity. In the case of lands managed by the Department of Defence, which constitute the greatest proportion of land owned by the Australian Government, inappropriate fire regimes can also result in training areas being unable to support preparedness training of the Australian Defence Force. These inappropriate regimes may also pose an unacceptable risk from wildfire to Defence facilities and infrastructure.

The Australian State of the Environment reports and the National Land and Water Resources Audit and other research support the conclusion that changed fire regimes are threatening ecosystems across Australia. Therefore, the Australian Government notes and supports the COAG National Bushfire Inquiry Report's findings that prescribed burning regimes need to be based on a shared understanding of the assets and the fire regime needs of the assets within the landscape. Moreover, prescribed burning regimes need to be managed in an adaptive style taking account of increasing knowledge of fire within the landscape.

	<p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment The Commonwealth supported Recommendation 11, but basically said it was up to the states and territories. I don't believe the states and territories have made any significant changes in this regard since 2003.</p> <p>I believe Recommendation 13 is one of the most critical recommendations, and if it had been fully implemented following the 2003 fires some of the devastation in Victoria may have been averted. The recommendation hasn't been implemented and state authorities are still releasing dubious statistics.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments implements to a minimum standard adequate access to all public lands including wilderness areas of national parks</p> <p>Recommendation 9 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments resolve to increase water access points for bushfire fighting on public land to the minimum national standard.</p> <p>Recommendation 10 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments initiate consideration of the relaxation of restrictions on the movement of fire fighting equipment during declared emergencies.</p>	<p>Government Response The COAG National Bushfire Inquiry recommends that COAG adopt a statement of national principles as the framework for the future direction of bushfire mitigation and management in Australia. COAG has agreed to refer the draft national principles to the Augmented Australasian Police Minister's Council for further development. The Australian Government's Attorney-General will be asked to take these recommendations into account during the discussions on national principles.</p> <p>Access to state, territory and Australian Government owned and/or managed lands and national parks is generally outlined in plans of management developed to meet statutory requirements. The Australian Government believes that all jurisdictions, when developing plans of management for their respective national parks, wilderness and other public land ensure that appropriate definitions of access, including access to water, are included.</p>

	<p>Development of plans for national parks generally entails extensive public consultation and input, where appropriate. Plans are designed to protect the full range of assets, including management of risks associated with bushfire and the spread of weeds and disease. While the management of public lands owned by state, territory or local governments is a matter for those governments, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council <i>Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach</i> (2005) provides for all national parks and other reserves in Australia to be managed in accordance with fire management plans which take into account the purpose of the reservation and management objectives of the reserve. The document notes that fire management plans need to consider, <i>inter alia</i>, public safety, the ecological role of fire, asset protection, landscape effects of fire and indigenous use of fire.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendations 6 and 9 were to be referred to Police and Attorney-General Ministerial Councils but if no national standard has been developed then no implementation will have occurred.</p> <p>Recommendation 10 was referred to Police and Attorney-General Ministerial Councils and should have been dealt with, but I don't know the outcome.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments develop a mechanism that ensures that appropriate measures are taken by</p>	<p>Government Response Australian Governments will continue to implement actions under the National Weeds Strategy (launched June 1997) to eradicate weeds, including as appropriate, weed occurrences</p>

<p>public and private land managers for the eradication of weeds following a bushfire event.</p>	<p>following a bushfire event. The National Resource Management Ministerial Council, through the Australian Weeds Committee of the National Resource Management Standing Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Weeds Strategy.</p> <p>The next Primary Industries Ministerial Council and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council meetings will be on 26 and 27 October 2005 respectively. It is anticipated that any work referred to the Ministerial Councils from COAG would go forward to the October meetings. The Australian Government will seek to ensure that these matters are considered at these upcoming meetings.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment A commitment was given and numerous related projects have continued, but I suspect no reporting by the states and territories on this subject has occurred.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth work with the states and territories through the proposed Council of Australian Governments to review the response to bushfires to ensure that principles of fire prevention and rapid and effective initial attack are adopted and implemented by all rural fire authorities and public land managers.</p> <p>Recommendation 25 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seek to ensure that the Council of Australian Governments seek the</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports these recommendations and acknowledges the importance of national principles for bushfire mitigation and management which underpin existing approaches and set a framework that jurisdictions should work towards.</p> <p>Such principles need to emerge from a process of consultation. Draft principles have been agreed by COAG as a starting point with further consultation and any amendments necessary to be undertaken over the next twelve months, overseen by the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council. A report and</p>

<p>adoption by all states and territories of multi-agency protocols and agreements for fire management, similar to those in force in Tasmania.</p>	<p>recommendations on endorsement of a final set of principles will then be made to COAG.</p> <p>While ultimately the protocols and agreements adopted in any particular state or territory for the management of bushfires are a matter for that state or territory, the Australian Government strongly recommends the approaches outlined in Recommendations 20 and 25 with particular reference to effective initial attack on fires.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendation 20 was strongly supported by the Commonwealth and was taken to COAG. I don't believe it has been specifically introduced throughout rural fire services across Australia.</p> <p>Recommendation 25 was also supported by the Commonwealth, but I am not aware of any states and territories that have done anything towards putting in place this recommendation. Certainly Victoria hasn't, as conflict between agencies has been highlighted at the Victorian Royal Commission.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the proposed Council of Australian Governments review of the bushfire management initiate with the states, as a priority, a review of the responsibilities and potential liabilities of fire controllers with a view to developing principles of indemnification for reasonable, responsible and informed decision making. This review should extend to defining</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government understands and supports the intentions behind these recommendations. While it notes that the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management found that existing state and territory legislation dealing with occupational health and safety is sound and that the effort required to achieve a nationally uniform approach is not warranted, every opportunity should be taken to ultimately</p>

responsibility for occupational health and safety requirements in a way which allows practicable compliance where a reasonable degree of risk taking is urgently required to prevent the loss of life, property and environmental amenity from wildfire.

Recommendation 54

Further to recommendation 21 in chapter 4, the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that the proposed Council of Australian Governments review of the bushfire management, initiate with the states and territories, as a priority, a review of the duty of care of public and private landowners and their potential liability. This should be done with a view to developing clear and consistent principles that cover (but are not limited to) the following:

- Timely replacement/ repair of loss/damage (including to fences) resulting from fire fighting operations, suppression activities or wildfires.
- The liability of councils that imprudently approve the sale of land.
- The responsibilities and potential liabilities of fire controllers with a view to developing principles of indemnification for reasonable, responsible and informed decision making (including occupational health and safety).

achieve uniformity. The Australian Government will ensure that such a goal remains part of any future involvement of its Ministers. In other areas where volunteer firefighters may be liable, the COAG Inquiry was satisfied that volunteers do not face greater exposure than other citizens, but called on the states and territories to maintain a process of review, to ensure that judicial interpretations are reflected in policy and procedures and that volunteers are not disadvantaged, particularly when they deploy interstate.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

Some work has been done in these specific areas without any move towards uniformity across Australia.

Recommendations regarding the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)¹

¹ The House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires refers to the Natural Heritage Trust as the National Heritage Trust.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth through the National Heritage Trust assist the states and territories in the construction, maintenance and signage of fire trail networks.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth through the National Heritage Trust, offer assistance to the states and the ACT to develop specific prescribed burning guides, at least to the quality of Western Australia, for national parks and state forests throughout the mainland of south eastern Australia.

Recommendation 58

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth require state and territory governments to have in place comprehensive bushfire management plans as a pre-requisite for accessing funding from the National Heritage Trust and like programs.

Government Response

Recommendation 7 has been addressed by the Prime Minister's announcement on 8 September 2004 of the establishment of a \$15 million Bushfire Mitigation Fund over three years (\$5 million per annum), to contribute to the construction, maintenance and signage of fire trail networks. The Bushfire Mitigation Fund is being managed through the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

The objective of the Natural Heritage Trust, as outlined in the *Natural Heritage Trust Act 1997*, is to repair and replenish Australia's natural capital infrastructure. The Trust's operations and investments focus on the repair and enhancement of Australia's natural environment and the sustainable management of its natural resources.

The COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management recognises the important role of fire management in achieving sustainable landscape management objectives and commends the Natural Heritage Trust's support for a wide range of projects that are improving fire management, mitigation and recovery. Topics include: scientific knowledge of fire regimes and impacts on biodiversity; fire management planning and practices; rehabilitation of fire trails; bushfire recovery; threatened species recovery and habitat restoration; and indigenous fire knowledge and practices.

The Inquiry further notes the good progress being made in addressing appropriate fire management practices and bushfire risk management planning through regional natural resource

	<p>management plans supported by the Natural Heritage Trust.</p> <p>Australian and state and territory governments ensure that natural resource management regional plans developed under the NHT are consistent with nationally agreed strategies as they relate to the objectives of the Trust. Recommendation 14.1 of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management recommends the adoption by COAG of a statement of national principles as the framework for the future direction of bushfire mitigation and management in Australia. Following national agreement of principles for bushfire mitigation and management, all Governments would ensure that new regional natural resource management plans are consistent with relevant elements of these principles.</p> <p>Further, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council has endorsed principles for managing protected areas in Australia, as reflected in the Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach, statement of 2005. Consistent with this statement, the states and territories have agreed to develop management plans, including fire management plans, within 3 years. In addition, finding 6.12 of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management stated that 'Natural resource management regional plans developed under the Natural Heritage Trust should take bushfire management into account and be consistent with the bushfire risk management process.' All governments acknowledged this finding.</p> <p>A further opportunity to encourage appropriate consideration of fire management needs in natural resource management planning</p>
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	<p>will arise in the development of natural resource management funding arrangements to operate after conclusion of the current arrangements in June 2008.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendation 7 was implemented in 2004 with funding for 3 years. I'm unaware whether it has continued under the current administration. It is very difficult for predominantly local councils to continue this work without assistance from the states and Commonwealth.</p> <p>In relation to Recommendation 12, some work was done via the NHT, but in my view none have been completed to WA's standard.</p> <p>Recommendation 58 was never adequately implemented and NHT programs finished in 2008. Programs such as Caring for our Country should now be examined in this regard.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding spatial information</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 31 The Committee recommends that Geoscience Australia take responsibility, in conjunction with Emergency Management Australia, for developing a national spatial data policy to coordinate the development of data systems, the collection of data and the sharing of data between all the emergency response agencies across Australia, and that both agencies participate in the development and delivery of spatial information systems as</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government agrees that national consistency in datasets is essential for addressing an all-hazards approach to risk management, including bushfire risk.</p> <p>A wide range of data needs to be captured in order to full rationalise the entire emergency management process. This includes post-disaster data relating to the impact and recovery</p>

part of a national approach to emergency planning and management data. The first priority in policy development and of systems should be related to bushfire hazards.

Recommendation 32

The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia be required to participate in the development and delivery of spatial information systems as part of a national approach to emergency planning and management data. The first priority in policy development and of systems should be related to bushfire hazards.

Recommendation 33

The Committee recommends that the 1:100,000 national mapping program be accelerated to achieve an average life of no greater than 10 years with priority given to those areas most susceptible to national disasters.

from present-day or historical events, as well as basic exposure and vulnerability data to assess the potential impact of future events. This work needs to be coordinated with the activities identified and discussed under Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 8 and 14.

The Australian Government will continue to develop national consistency in national datasets relevant to bushfire mitigation and management under the Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure framework.

Mapping priorities will be developed in close collaboration with the national database needs addressed in Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 8 and 14. The Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources will be requested to take Recommendation 33 into account when preparing forward budgeting.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

In some respects Recommendation 31 is being carried out through the Office of Spatial Data Management (OSDM) within Geoscience Australia. However, it does not have the funding to effectively fully implement the recommendation and therefore the optimum situation for national spatial information is some way off.

Recommendation 32 –These matters are still being addressed within the states and territories without any national approach.

Recommendation 33 – Some work has been done but the 10 year goal has not yet been achieved.

<p>Recommendation 23</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth, through the Council of Australian Governments and the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, initiate an overhaul of the incident management systems used by bushfire agencies in Australia to better incorporate local knowledge and expertise and better understanding of the needs and circumstances of local rural communities in the management of major fire events.</p> <p>The Committee also recommends that this overhaul should aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refine the system to facilitate setting up simple command and control structures, closer to the fire ground, in tune with the ever changing local fire ground conditions and needs of local communities; • include training of incident management personnel on how to engage and involve local people in planning and management of fires; • establish national models for community fire planning and provide for the integration of community fire plans into incident management; and • include national reporting of the success of incident management of fires as a means of auditing the cost effectiveness or incident operations. <p>Recommendation 24</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the state and territory bushfire agencies ensure that, on a district basis, communications are addressed within the district operations plans and that the plans</p>	<p>Government Response</p> <p>The Australian Government strongly supports the adoption of a nationally agreed Australian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) Incident Control System, while recognising operational issues such as the incident management systems used by bushfire authorities in Australia are matters for the states and territories.</p> <p>The Australasian Fire Authorities Council is currently working with member agencies towards the development of a national system for multi-agency incident coordination, using the (AIIMS) Incident Control System as the basic building block. All fire services have agreed to the national adoption of the recently reviewed AIIMS and also all state emergency services have confirmed, through the Australian Council of State Emergency Services, that they will adopt the AIIMS on a phased state by state basis. Recommendations 23 and 30 will be addressed as part of that process.</p> <p>The Australian Government understands that the Australasian Fire Authorities Council has recognised the need for standard operating procedures for aircraft operations (Recommendation 30).</p> <p>The AIIMS Incident Control System potentially allows for the identification and integration of local knowledge during fire fighting operations. Increased use of local knowledge would be more related to training in the value of this information and organisational cultural changes in accepting the value of local</p>
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<p>are capable of easy adoption to incident action plans.</p> <p>Recommendation 30 The Committee recommends that in changing the incident management systems as proposed in recommendation 23 above all bushfire agencies review concerns about difficulties in communicating operational information from the fire front to air operations.</p> <p>Recommendation 37 The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia work through the Australasian Fire Authorities Council to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater emphasis be placed on pre-incident and incident preparation of communication plans as a means of ensuring effective interoperability between agencies at command and tactical levels. • That the speed of transfer of operational information between agencies at command level be regularly monitored to ensure that operational objectives are not being compromised. 	<p>knowledge than occurs in the currently documented process. While this is primarily a state and territory issue, the Australian Government strongly endorses this report's emphasis on the need for utilisation of local knowledge and encourages all jurisdictions to adopt this approach.</p> <p>The COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management has also recognised this issue in Recommendation 8.2 relating to further development of the AIIMS system.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendation 23 – I understand that the Australasian Fire Authorities Council did address this recommendation but I am unaware how far it has been taken.</p> <p>Recommendation 24 – I'm uncertain as to implementation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 30 – I understand technology developments have assisted substantially in improving these communications.</p> <p>Recommendation 37 – Some work has been done in this area through the Australian Inter-service Management System (AIIMS) but I understand full interoperability has still not been achieved.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding communications</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 34 The Committee recommends that Emergency Management</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government agrees in principle to these</p>

Australia and the Australian Communications Authority jointly with the Australasian Fire Authorities Council:

- Initiate an urgent review on a district basis, of the suitability of the current allocated radio spectrum to ensure that as far as possible, fire fighter safety is not being compromised through inadequate communications.
- Commit to the development, in conjunction with representative bodies of all emergency services, to a National Strategic Radio System.
- That the coordination of the deliberations be assigned to Emergency Management Australia.

Recommendation 41

The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia request the Australasian Fire Authorities Council to:

- Determine protocols and standards on a national basis for the adoption and implementation of mobile data services by all fire fighting agencies with a view to ensuring national compatibility.
- Consider the development of a 'closed user group', utilising satellite telephony, as an interim measure for achieving interoperability between member agencies on a national level.

recommendations, in particular the objective of developing a National Strategic Radio System, and the issues raised will be directed to the National Coordinating Committee for Government Radiocommunications (NCCGR), which is tasked with developing and maintaining a national strategic plan for Government radiocommunications. The NCCGR consists of representatives of the Australian Government and all state and territory governments.

The Australian Government, through the Australian Communications and Media Authority's participation in the NCCGR, gives effect to its acceptance in 2002 of Recommendation 6a of the 'Radiocommunications Review Report', that the Australian Communications and Media Authority provide technical assistance if state and territory emergency and police services seek to cooperate in establishing a national emergency services network.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

Recommendation 34 – While problems still occurred in this area during the Victorian bush fires, technology has progressed substantially since the 2003 Inquiry, therefore the Senate should investigate current technology opportunities to solve these problems.

Recommendation 41 – I recall that this was taken up by AFAC shortly following the release of my report (as reported to me by the Chair of AFAC), however, I don't believe national compatibility has been achieved. In fact I don't believe there can be full compatibility until the development of a national Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), which is much needed 'smart infrastructure' not yet recognised by organisations such as Infrastructure Australia.

Recommendation 35

The Committee recommends that:

- As a short term objective, the use of '40' channel UHF CB equipment be adopted for coordination and interoperability of communications at fire ground level.
- As a longer term objective a national communications plan be developed and incorporate the provision of low powered VHF channel allocations for the purpose of ensuring compatible fire ground communications between all agencies on a national basis.
- That the use of UHF CB between units on the fire ground be included in communications planning for intra-state and interstate deployments.

Government Response

With regard to the Citizen Band Radio Stations (CB) elements of this recommendation, the Australian Communications and Media Authority has advised that UHF CB radio is an open informal uncoordinated low-cost radiocommunications application that can be used by anyone in Australia. While anyone can use the Class Licensed CB radio spectrum, there are no provisions to reserve any particular channel for emergency service use. That lack of coordination and control might make CB unsuitable for emergency or safety communication purposes. There is the possibility that other users may not respond to emergency calls for assistance or not behave in a responsible manner at critical times (anti-social behaviour is known to occur among some users of CB radio equipment).

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has allocated specific channels in the UHF band (450 to 470 MHz) for exclusive use by police and emergency services. The Government is working with the NCCGR regarding access to, and use of, these channels for interoperable communications between agencies in times of national emergencies and natural disasters.

The remaining element of this recommendation relating to VHF communications and objectives of a national communications plan will be referred to the NCCGR.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

While problems still occurred in this area during the Victorian bush fires, technology has progressed substantially since the 2003 Inquiry, therefore the Senate should investigate current technology opportunities to solve these problems.

Recommendation 36

The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia and the Australian Communications Authority work with state and territory bush fire authorities to ensure that that district communication plans have regard for the amount of radio traffic that may be generated under the most severe conditions.

Recommendation 38

The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia and the Australian Communications Authority, in conjunction with the respective state and territory governments, ensure the survivability of essential communication installations during fire incidents by strategic fuel management around the assets.

Government Response

The Australian Government acknowledges the importance of good communications plans when severe events such as bushfires occur. Therefore, state and territory emergency service organisations which have responsibility in this area must adequately manage their dedicated networks on the ground during and incident to avoid congestion.

Although the issues raised in Recommendation 36 are a state and territory responsibility, they should be considered by the NCCGR. Through the Protective Security Coordination Centre as the Australian Government member of the NCCGR, Emergency Management Australia, as an observer to the National Coordinating Committee, will pursue the objectives of Recommendation 36.

While generally the issues raised in Recommendation 38 are a state and territory responsibility, the Department of Communications IT and the Arts and Emergency Management Australia will bring this matter to the attention of the National Committee for Critical Infrastructure Protection, where consideration will be given as to whether the matter needs to be passed to the Communications Sector Infrastructure Assurance Advisory Group for advice on the current plans of telecommunication providers to protect their installations during fire incidents. It should be noted that communications issues were also addressed in the COAG directed National Bushfire Inquiry.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

Recommendation 36 – This is also a matter that should be assessed in the light of new technology.

	<p>Recommendation 38 – This recommendation was referred to the National Committee for Critical Infrastructure Protection and subsequently highlighted to state and territory authorities.</p>
<p>Recommendation 39 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth investigate, and where necessary, require the urgent enhancement of the provision of emergency power and telecommunications services for the purpose of restoring essential services expeditiously in areas affected by fire or other natural disaster and where necessary to place licence requirements on telecommunication providers to do so.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government recognises that public networks are already designed for business continuity with redundancy and a high degree of resiliency. Providers have a capacity (although this is clearly dependent on the incident and level of damage etc.) to respond to provide extra communications capacity.</p> <p>The Australian Government does not support the proposal to require power and telecommunications providers (as part of licence conditions) to enhance existing backup power and telecommunications systems across their entire networks as this would place very significant cost burdens on providers and, consequently, consumers. For example, costs may be incurred due to provision of additional facilities in the case of telecommunications. However, further improvements to bushfire mitigation and management practices and procedures are being pursued by all jurisdictions, through the responses to the COAG Natural Disasters in Australia report and the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment As the placing of licence conditions was not supported by the Commonwealth there was no action taken on the second part of this recommendation. I'm unaware of any other actions with respect to the first part.</p>
<p>Recommendation 40</p>	<p>Government Response</p>

<p>The Committee recommends that, for the purpose of communications for the police, ambulance and fire brigades, any rental costs associated with the use of radio sites under the care, control or management of the Commonwealth, state, territory or local government be waived, other than for the ongoing cost associated with the use of power at the site.</p>	<p>The Australian Communications and Media Authority provides radiocommunications licence fee concessions and exemptions for certain emergency and safeguarding-of-life bodies where those bodies are staffed principally by volunteers and meet other specified criteria. While the decision to waive costs for any user of a radio site is a commercial decision for the owner of that site, the Australian Government, at the earliest opportunity, will discuss this issue with relevant parties, including through the NCCGR. The Australian Government encourages site owners to favourably consider requests by emergency service clients to waive some costs during times of emergency, in recognition of the public good provided to the community by such groups.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment As many operators could be involved with this recommendation it is difficult to know to what extent it has been addressed.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding volunteers</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 27 The Committee recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Commonwealth implement a program similar to the Army Reservist Employer Support Program for the re-imburement of costs incurred by employers of volunteer fire fighters when attending bush fires for a period exceeding five days in any month; and the Commonwealth consult with the states and territories through Council of Australian 	<p>Government Response The Australian Government acknowledges the vital and significant contribution emergency services volunteers make to the safety and well-being of Australian society. Recognition is an important part of volunteering but the Australian Government recognises that proposals that seek to provide financial recognition for volunteers may not always be consistent with the volunteer ethos.</p> <p>The Australian Government does not endorse the proposal for payment to the employers of emergency services volunteers similar to the Army</p>

Governments to develop a range of measures related to local government rates, state government charges and insurance costs to provide rebates for registered volunteer fire fighters.

- the Commonwealth consider the feasibility of taxation relief on costs incurred by registered fire fighting volunteers in the line of duty.

Recommendation 28

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with the Australasian Fire Authorities Council to review the insurance cover provided to volunteer fire fighters in all states and territories and ensure that cover is adequate for loss of life or injury and related loss of income and property lost in the line of duty.

Reservist Employer Support Program, due to the difficulties in implementing such a scheme and the potential inequities. The Australian Government notes that this position is consistent with the view expressed in the report of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management.

It is worth noting that the Australian Government already provides generous tax concessions to emergency services organisations. Emergency services or search and rescue teams consisting of volunteers and voluntary organisations such as bush fire brigades, which have as their central purpose the provision of direct relief to disadvantaged people, may qualify as Public Benevolent Institutions (PBIs). This will be the case there they are not arms of government and subject to government control. As PBIs, emergency services organisations are entitled to a number of tax concessions, such as income tax exemption, fringe benefit tax exemption and deductible gift recipient status.

In recognition of the valuable work of government emergency service coordination bodies, the Australian Government has introduced legislation to extend deductible gift recipient support to the coordinating bodies for fire and emergency services in each state and territory. If an organisation is a deductible gift recipient, donors are able to claim a tax deduction for most gifts made to the organisation provided that certain conditions are met.

The Australian Government acknowledges the need for greater non-monetary recognition of volunteers but does not support the proposal for tax concessions for individuals.

It is noted that the Australian Government has announced funding of \$16 million over four years to establish a National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund. This fund will boost the recruitment, skills and training base of volunteer organizations at the front line of emergency management. Arrangements for the establishment of this Fund are well advanced, and the development of those arrangements has involved active consultation with states and territories and other stakeholders, including the Australasian Fire Authorities Council.

Tax Concession Proposal

While acknowledging the important work undertaken by emergency services volunteers, the Australian Government does not consider it appropriate for it to provide financial assistance in recognition of their out-of-pocket expenses. Also, as previously stated to the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management, the Australian Government does not consider that tax concessions are the appropriate mechanism for providing this assistance.

The Australian Government notes that volunteer emergency services organisations are primarily funded by state and territory governments and, depending on the management of the individual organisation, volunteers may already be compensated for their out-of-pocket expenses. The Australian Government does not support an additional Commonwealth outlays program that would ensure direct reimbursement, as such a program would go against the principle of volunteering; that is, the contribution to the community is the motivation and reward for participating in the activity. This was acknowledged in submissions made to the House of Representatives Select Committee by various volunteer fire brigades including Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

The Australian Government notes that tax deductions are generally considered to be inferior to outlays measures in encouraging behavioural change, as the degree of benefit an individual received from a tax deduction is dependent on the marginal tax rate they face and therefore their income. Similarly, tax rebates can generally only benefit people who pay tax. Any volunteers who do not pay tax would generally not be able to access a benefit provided in this form. Also, an income tax concession would impose a cost on the Australian Government for what is primarily a state and territory government matter.

The Australian Government considers that if income tax concessions were available to emergency services volunteers only, it is likely that there would be pressure to extend them to other volunteer groups. The proposal may generate a significant cost to revenue. Further, the Australian Government notes that such a proposal may have considerable impact on the Australian Taxation Office's administration of allowable deductible expenses and add greater complexity to the tax system.

The Australian Government notes that issues concerning volunteers raised by the report *Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements*, endorsed in principle by COAG (Recommendation 58) will be taken forward by the Australian Emergency Management Committee.

In particular, in relation to Recommendation 28 of the Nairn Inquiry regarding insurance cover to volunteer fire fighters, Recommendation 58 (c) of the *Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation,*

	<p><i>Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i> Report asks, <i>inter alia</i>, that state and territory governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and compare the legal protections provided in their legislation to determine whether it offers adequate cover for both volunteers and their organisations; and • consider providing assistance with the provision of public liability insurance for emergency management volunteer organisations. <p>Mr Gary Nairn –Comment Recommendation 27 – This recommendation has not been acted upon.</p> <p>Recommendation 28 – I'm not aware of any changes that may have occurred.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding insurance and charges</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 42 The Committee strongly recommends that the New South Wales, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments abolish the Fire Levy tax they impose on home and business insurance premiums (wherever applicable), making it payable through household rates instead.</p> <p>Any cost savings gained by the insurance industry through relief from collecting Fire Levies should be passed on to policyholders through reduced premiums. At the same time the Committee urges the Insurance Council of Australia to</p>	<p>Government Response Fire Levy taxes are levied by state and territory governments. In relation to Recommendation 44, the Australian Government considers it appropriate that state and territory governments consider providing exemptions for emergency services volunteers.</p> <p>In regard to Recommendation 42, the Australian Government agrees that state and territory governments should reduce or eliminate inefficient and inequitable taxes. The Australian Government Treasurer wrote to the state and territory Treasurers on 11 September 2003 in regard to the HIH Royal Commission recommendation that</p>

<p>run ongoing education campaigns to increase public awareness on bushfire preparedness, including the need for insurance.</p> <p>Recommendation 44</p> <p>The Committee suggests that registered volunteer fire fighters be exempt from paying Fire Levy tax to help offset some of the expense they incur during active duty. The exemption could be for a period of 12 months following each bushfire season in which they are proven to have fought fires.</p>	<p>state and territories abolish fire services levies on insurers.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment</p> <p>While Recommendation 42 was supported by the Commonwealth and steps were taken to encourage states and territories to do so I am note sure where there has been universal change. However, I am aware that in some locations, fire levies on insurance policies have been replaced by an Emergencies Levy as part of rates (eg. Snowy River Shire Council).</p> <p>Recommendation 44 – I'm not aware whether any Local Government Councils have taken this step.</p>
<p>Recommendation 43</p> <p>The Committee recommends that taxes on insurance premiums be calculated only on the premium in order to eliminate the current cascading cost.</p>	<p>Government Response</p> <p>While this issue is the responsibility of the state and territory governments, the Australian Government supports the recommendation and strongly encourages state and territory governments to change their current policies. The GST has provided the states and territories with increased revenues and they should not be resorting to "tax on tax" methodologies to further increase revenues.</p> <p>General insurance polices such as household and fire insurance are subject to GST in the same manner as other goods and services. Under the <i>A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999</i>, GST does not apply to taxes that states and territories charge on insurance policies.</p> <p>However, the level of state taxes and the calculation of these taxes is determined by the states and territories. It is a matter for individual</p>

	<p>states and territories to decide whether their taxes are levied on a GST inclusive or exclusive price of the premium.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment I believe some changes have been done in some states but not universally.</p>
<p>Recommendation 45 The Committee recommends that the Insurance Council of Australia coordinates a public education campaign aimed at illustrating the importance of asset protection and how this can be achieved (that is, insurance products).</p> <p>Recommendation 46 The Committee recommends that insurance companies ensure that potential and existing policyholders are aware of the need to regularly review their insurance policies to prevent undervaluing. This could be done through renewal notices and quarterly reminders. This should include a list of bushfire risk reduction measures that policyholders can implement to decrease the cost of their premium.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports attempts to ensure that the insurance industry takes account of lessons learnt regarding the level of under-insurance and the treatment of policy holders during the recent bushfires.</p> <p>The Insurance Council of Australia is currently reviewing its Code of Practice. The Minister for Revenue and Assistant Treasurer will write to the Council drawing its attention to these recommendations.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Recommendation 45 – The insurance industry has certainly increased its understanding of bushfire risks following the 2003 bushfire Inquiries but the Senate Committee will need to ascertain from the Insurance Council of Australia as to its specific involvement in public education campaigns that have occurred.</p> <p>Recommendation 46 – All major insurance companies have taken a number of steps in this regard and are gradually utilising technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to better analyse bushfire risks when determining policy premiums.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding building construction</i></p>	

Recommendation 47

The Committee recommends that Standards Australia incorporate building maintenance into AS3959–1999: Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas, perhaps renaming it as AS3959–1999: Construction and Maintenance of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas.

Recommendation 49

The Committee recommends that Standards Australia review the clarity of AS3959–1999: Construction of buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas to ensure that all relevant stakeholders can interpret and apply the Standard in the way it is intended.

Recommendation 50

The Committee recommends that Program D of the Commonwealth Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre examines the (pending) outcome of the ABCB’s review of the existing Building Code of Australia bushfire provisions (including Standard AS3959–1999) to determine their adequacy and the ways in which compliance can be better managed. This should include extending its scope to cover existing buildings and those that are not in areas declared as bushfire prone, yet still on the urban-rural interface and therefore, potentially at risk.

Government Response

The Australian Government supports these recommendations and considers that the Australian Building Codes Board should place priority on its current review of the Building Code of Australia provisions and Standard AS 3959.

The Australian Building Codes Board, in conjunction with Standards Australia and with advice from the Bureau of Meteorology, is currently reviewing the existing Building Code of Australia provisions and Standard AS 3959 to ensure they are practical, effective, reflect good regulatory principles and informed by the latest scientific knowledge. The Australian Building Codes Board is a core participant of the Bushfire CRC and will direct research within the Bushfire CRC to aid the development of the provisions for construction in bushfire-prone areas.

The Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources will write to the Australian Building Codes Board, identifying the review as a priority and reinforcing both the urgency for, and benefits of, encouraging Standards Australia to complete the revision of the Australian Standard that follows the COAG *Principles and Guidelines for National Standard Setting and Regulatory Action by Ministerial Councils and Standard-Setting Bodies* and its enactment through the Building Code of Australia. In his letter the Minister will ask the Board to resolve as soon as possible any other outstanding issues relating to the building code and natural hazards including bushfires and he will refer the Board to Recommendations 47, 49 and 50 of the report.

Mr Gary Nairn – Comment

	<p>Recommendations 47 and 49 – I'm aware that the Australian Building Codes Board issued a Regulatory Impact Assessment in 2009 for a proposed amendment to AS 3959-1999, however, I don't believe the amendment has been finally put in place.</p> <p>Recommendation 50 – I understand work in this area has been done by the Bushfire CRC but the current status is unknown to me.</p>
<p>Recommendation 48 The Committee recommends that state and territory governments be required to regularly perform risk assessments to the land within their jurisdictions to ensure that bushfire prone areas are accurately identified and can be appropriately managed. This should include possibly prohibiting, or at least limiting, reticulated development in these areas. If building is effectively prohibited on land previously zoned for residential or commercial building, state and territory governments, in conjunction with local councils, should adequately compensate the affected landholders.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports this recommendation and encourages the states and territories to continue improving bushfire risk assessment through the implementation of the reform commitments and recommendations in the COAG report <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i>. In particular, Reform Commitment 4 states that governments should:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>take action to ensure more effective statutory State, Territory and Local Government land use planning, development and building control regimes that systematically identify natural hazards and include measures to reduce the risk of damage from these natural hazards.</i></p> <p>Reform Commitment 4 and Recommendations 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the COAG <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i> Report are currently being addressed through the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council. The Australian Government is also providing training in risk based land use planning through Emergency Management Australia.</p>

	<p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment While states and territories will claim they comply with the first part of Recommendation 47, scrutiny will reveal they fall short of a comprehensive assessment. As the same constitutional requirement for compensation on just terms that applies to the Commonwealth does not apply to the states and territories I doubt there is an example of the second part being implemented.</p>
<p><i>Recommendations regarding miscellaneous actions</i></p>	
<p>Recommendation 22 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Attorney-General engage the Commonwealth, states and territories in a review of occupational health and safety legislation as it affects the proper and effective functioning of bush fire services.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government agrees that the occupational health and safety concerns of volunteers are important issues.</p> <p>As noted under Recommendation 54, the Australian government notes that Finding 12.2 of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management found that existing state and territory legislation dealing with occupational health and safety is sound and that the effort required to achieve a nationally uniform approach is not warranted. Ongoing review of the issue was proposed.</p> <p>Occupational health and safety issues concerning volunteers were also raised in Recommendation 58 of the COAG Report: <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i> and will be addressed by the reconstituted Australian Emergency Management Committee, chaired by the Attorney-General's Department.</p> <p>During the 2004 election, the Australian Government announced a commitment of \$16 million over four years to establish a National</p>

	<p>Emergency Volunteer Support Fund. This fund will boost the recruitment, skills and training base of volunteer organisations at the front line of emergency management. Arrangements for the establishment of this Fund are well advanced, as noted earlier.</p> <p>Matters raised in this recommendation will be included as an agenda item at the next meeting of the Australian Emergency Management Committee, with particular reference to the state and territory review processes.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment This is ongoing with the states and territories which have responsibility. They would need to be approached as to the current situation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 26 The Committee recommends that Emergency Management Australia initiate a process involving Australasian Fire Authorities Council and the Australian Assembly of Volunteer Fire Brigades Association to review the coordination of cross border fire fighting arrangements and interstate deployment of fire fighting resources. The review should specifically consider training on the full range of equipment and procedures likely to be encountered, standardisation of equipment and procedures, communication and the provision of information about local characteristics such as access to water.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government supports the improvement in cross-jurisdiction arrangements and improvements in inter-operability and standardisation of equipment. It is noted that through the Australian Emergency Management Committee process there has been the development of a paper <i>Guidelines for the Provision of Support Between States</i>. While issues related to standardisation remain the responsibility of the states and territories, Emergency Management Australia will work with the Australasian Fire Authorities Council through the Emergency Management Committee to overcome any inconsistencies.</p> <p>The Australian Government, through the Australian National Training Authority, has played a role in identifying standards for mitigation against fire and emergencies. These standards have been nationally</p>

	<p>agreed after extensive consultation with stakeholders and are being used for training purposes. The standards allow for training in specific pieces of equipment and differing circumstances and cover management as well as operational skills. The standards also allow for local legislative and regulatory requirements as well as being able to be used for training on equipment used locally. Procedures are documented in training support material developed to support implementation of the standards. However the standards do not and cannot accommodate or prescribe the use of standardised equipment where this has not been agreed nationally.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Some work has been done between jurisdictions with respect to cross border assistance but there is still no national standard on equipment and other matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 29 The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth should commit funding for aerial fire fighting beyond the 2003–04 season on the proviso that the Australasian Fire Authorities Council and the state and territory governments make a commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid initial attack of all wildfires during the bush fire season regardless of tenure. • Deployment on long term contracts of a mix of aircraft, including fixed wing. • Deployment of aircraft on a nationally coordinated risk analysis basis to be updated as each fire season unfolds. 	<p>Government Response The Australian Government believes that the investment in aerial firefighting must be utilised effectively. This includes the use of appropriate aircraft at the appropriate time during a fire event. The Australian Government has already announced further funding for the National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre of \$5.5 million per annum for the three years 2004-05 to 2006-07. The Department of Transport and Regional Services will require detailed acquittal of the Australian Government's contribution to aerial firefighting resources to ensure the most effective use of aircraft.</p> <p>The decision to attack fires using aerial firefighting equipment is solely that of the jurisdiction with "ownership" of the fire. The National Aerial Firefighting Centre has no role in making this type of decision,</p>

- Provision of nationally coordinated full ground support.
- Development of training arrangements for air crews, ground support crews, incident management teams and fire fighters to a national standard.
- Development of systems of effective aerial control of fire bombing operations.

although the new "national" arrangements allow for a more flexible movement of resources between jurisdictions in response to their requests.

The mix aircraft in the national pool is determined by the needs of states and territories taking account their individual firefighting requirements and budgetary constraints. This process is centrally coordinated by the National Aerial Firefighting Centre to enable the best mix of aircraft using economies of scale within budget constraints.

Deployment of aircraft is decided by states and territories in conjunction with the National Aerial Firefighting Centre prior to each season, taking into account their perceived and immediate fire risk. This is reviewed annually prior to each fire season with the needs of each state and territory being taken into account by National Aerial Firefighting Centre as part of its planning process.

Ground support for each aircraft is a requirement of the current "wet" lease arrangements, ie. a service is leased not jus the aircraft.

It is understood that training arrangements are in place as part of Australasian Fire Authorities Council training Resource Kit for aviation. This is based on the National Public Safety Training Package as part of the national competency framework.

Systems for aerial control of fire bombing operations have been in place for some time as part of the suite of tools for firefighting. In addition, the Bushfire CRC will be undertaking research evaluating effectiveness of aircraft and the results of that research will be considered by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council.

	<p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment Further funding from the Commonwealth was forthcoming, covering up to and including 2006-07, however there were no provisos along the lines of the recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 52 The Committee recommends that the Australasian Fire Authorities Council’s suggested evacuation protocol be adopted by all of the Australian states and territories.</p>	<p>Government Response The Australian Government notes the importance of clear advice for residents during a bushfire and supports this recommendation. It is important that the message of "go early or stay and defend" is communicated carefully because in relation to other disasters it may not be appropriate to allow a resident to stay.</p> <p>The Bushfire CRC is examining these issues within the broad context of Program C of its research which looks at the social impact and elements of preparedness of communities at risk. The Bushfire CRC's research outcomes will help inform the development of policy in this area.</p> <p>Recommendation 8.7 of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management also addresses the issue of a "go early or stay and defend" policy.</p> <p>COAG has asked the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Australian Emergency Management Committee to consider the implementation of a nationally consistent approach and provide guidance to jurisdictions on issues related to community information, training, warnings and evacuations for disaster situations.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment</p>

	<p>The debate on this issue that followed the Victorian bushfires is indication enough of how little notice was taken of this report by the states and territories following its release in 2003.</p>
<p>Recommendation 55 The Committee recommends that the functions and administration of Emergency Management Australia be reviewed to develop an organisation that is proactive and involved in the development and implementation of national policy on emergency response.</p>	<p>Government Response The Department of Transport and Regional Services is the Australian Government agency with principal responsibility for natural disaster policy matters, including natural disaster relief and mitigation in the form of financial assistance to the states and territories; the Attorney-General's Department (including Emergency Management Australia) is responsible for Australian Government emergency management.</p> <p>The endorsement in principle of the High Level Group Report <i>Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i> has involved Emergency Management Australia heavily in the establishment of, and support for, the high level governance of emergency management in Australia. This will involve Emergency Management Australia at all levels of National policy development, where appropriate. Further, Emergency Management Australia is a member of the National Counter Terrorism Committee and the Australian Government Counter Terrorism Policy Committee, thereby involving Emergency Management Australia in the development of national security related policy. Through these means, Emergency Management Australia is involved pro-actively in the integration of crisis and consequence management, in an all hazard context. Evidence of this was recently tested by Emergency Management Australia bringing consequence management issues to the fore during Tsunami Assist.</p> <p>The current arrangements are supported in finding 8.1 of the COAG National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management which states</p>

	<p>that "The current all-hazards control and coordination arrangements at the national and state and territory levels are adequate for the operational management of bushfires in Australia".</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment While this recommendation was not implemented as such, the government at the time believed EMA was actively involved through its home department in these matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 56 The Committee recommends in acknowledgement of the expertise that the Commonwealth can bring to the Australasian Fire Authorities Council and of funding already supplied to the Council for the development of a National Aerial Firefighting Strategy, that the current status of Emergency Management Australia on AFAC as an associate member be upgraded to full membership and that full membership also be extended to the Department of Defence.</p>	<p>Government Response Emergency Management Australia became a full member of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council in October 2003 and represents the Australian Government on the Council. The Department of Defence is a member of three Australasian Fire Authorities Council committees.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment EMA is now a full member and the Department of Defence is a member of AFAC committees.</p>
<p>Recommendation 57 The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services review its record keeping practices to show the type of emergency for which assistance is provided through the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements.</p>	<p>Government Response The Department of Transport and Regional Services is currently reviewing the Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements in light of recommendations related to the arrangements made in the COAG Report: <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i>, accepted by all Australian Governments in December 2003. The Committee's recommendations will be given particular consideration as part of that review.</p> <p>Mr Gary Nairn – Comment This was done, but it would be useful to know how this is now handled</p>

	following departmental structural changes in recent years.
Council of Australian Governments National Inquiry into Bushfire Mitigation and Management (2004)	
<p>Recommendation 3.1 Learning how to live with fire The Inquiry recommends that state and territory governments and the Australian Government jointly develop and implement national and regionally relevant education programs about bushfire, to be delivered to all Australian children as a basic life skill.</p> <p>These programs should emphasise individual and household preparedness and survival as well as the role of fire in the Australian landscape.</p> <p>Program effectiveness should be audited by each state and territory after five years, with a national report to be provided to the Council of Australian Governments.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG supports Recommendation 3.1 which is aimed at integrating bushfire education into school education. Jurisdictions provided examples to the Inquiry to show that much work has already been done both in schools and within the community. COAG considers it important that attention be given to how bushfire education can be properly integrated into the school curriculum, although conscious of the range of competing pressures. Due regard also needs to be paid to the development of high quality resource materials and other support for teachers. COAG will request that the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, with reference to the National Resource Management Ministerial Council, consider the implementation of the recommendation and report back to COAG within 12 months.</p> <p>Community bushfire education outside schools is significant but more difficult to formalise. COAG will request that the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council collect and share information on best practice in community bushfire education across jurisdictions in order to assist jurisdictions to adopt appropriate measures, having regard to particular risk factors and local conditions.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4.1 The risk management process</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG agrees that a structured risk management process offers the best</p>

<p>The Inquiry recommends that a structured risk-management process based on the Australian Standard for Risk Management be further developed and applied in all aspects of bushfire mitigation and management, informed by a thorough understanding of the full range of assets.</p>	<p>framework for making strategic and operational decisions about bushfire mitigation and management and supports the call in Recommendation 4.1 for the further development and application of structured approaches in each state and territory.</p> <p>The Department of Transport and Regional Services, through Geoscience Australia, is developing a national risk assessment framework, together with models, tools and databases for sudden-impact natural hazards. Hazards of immediate interest include earthquake, flood, severe wind and bushfire. The process will develop a thorough understanding of environmental, biodiversity and heritage assets. A key objective is to develop risk assessment capabilities to enable the comparison of risk from these hazards across hazards and across regions so that risk treatment options can be optimised against a common understanding and common measures of risk.</p> <p>COAG notes that such work may have some resource implications and that jurisdictions are able to explore the use of funding provided under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5.1 Research, information and analysis The Inquiry recommends the provision of additional resources jointly by the Australian Government and the state and territory governments for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to accelerate the research necessary for the characterisation of fuel loads and dynamics for Australian ecosystems (both natural and exotic), the characterisation of fire behaviour and ecological responses, the development of ‘burning guides’ from 	<p>COAG Response COAG supports the research proposed in recommendation 5.1 and notes that research on many of these areas is already being undertaken by a number of bodies including the CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre under its program covering <i>Safe Prevention, Preparation and Suppression</i>. Such ecological research is long term with time frames extending in excess of 10 years and is also central to the activities of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council.</p>

this information, and the compilation of this information and knowledge in nationally accessible databases; and

- the establishment of a national network of long-term ecological research sites to provide a basis for long-term monitoring of the impacts of fire regimes and fire events.

COAG will request that the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre provide advice jointly to the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the Primary Industries Ministerial Council on the proposals to accelerate research into fuel loads and dynamics, fire behaviour and ecological responses, the development of burning guides and the compilation of these data into accessible databases, as well as the proposal for a national network of ecological research sites. The Centre, which is itself currently undertaking research of fire regimes and the impact of fire on ecosystems and ecological processes, will be asked to provide advice on whether there is any need for additional sites or further resources to address long-term impacts. It will need to consult with other bodies such as the CSIRO, the Bureau of Rural Sciences and Geoscience Australia, in drawing together its advice. COAG will request the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council to coordinate advice on the need for additional sites, how they might be administered and any resourcing requirements.

COAG also notes the importance of Finding 5.3 of the Report which highlights the role of the Bureau of Meteorology in providing high quality locally-specific weather information and forecasting services. Jurisdictions expressed some concern at the apparent withdrawal of some observation stations by the Bureau as a result of resource pressures and the gaps this could leave in local forecasting capacity. The Australian Emergency Management Committee will seek advice from jurisdictions about perceived gaps in local fire weather forecasting services as a basis for a discussion with the Bureau.

The Committee shall report the outcome of those discussions, options

	<p>for addressing any identified problem areas and resource implications to the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council for consideration.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5.2 The Inquiry recommends that the Australian Government and the state and territory governments jointly provide additional resources and work in partnership to establish and refine a national program of fire regime mapping.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG agrees on the importance of a nationally consistent framework that would allow fire regime data to be shared between jurisdictions. A national approach would focus on standards, coordination, responsibilities and resourcing. As the Report noted, pioneering work has been done in this area by the Western Australian Department of Land Information and the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre and is complemented by the work of the CSIRO through its Sentinel project and work in other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Building on this expertise COAG will request the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council, in consultation with the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the Primary Industries Ministerial Council, to bring forward a proposal with the assistance of the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council within 12 months, which addresses the scope to enhance consistency and rate of mapping with regard to standards and responsibility for the work in each jurisdiction. COAG notes that such work may have some resource implications and that jurisdictions are able to explore the use of funding provided under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5.3 The Inquiry recommends that the Australian Government and the state and territory governments continue to develop national consistency in data sets relevant to bushfire</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG recognises the existing work in all jurisdictions toward the collection of relevant bushfire data sets and the initiative being undertaken at the national level by Geoscience Australia, under the</p>

<p>mitigation and management under the Australian Spatial Data Infrastructure framework, and within this context, identify and resource national bushfire data set coordinators.</p>	<p>Disaster Mitigation Australia Package, to develop consistent data for natural disasters. COAG will request the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to engage the assistance of the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council in the development of proposals to enhance consistency in bushfire data collections, noting that each jurisdiction will consider the appropriate mechanism for coordinating data.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5.4 The Inquiry recommends that the Australian Government, in partnership with the states and territories and relevant research organisations, develop a strategy for sustaining bushfire research and capacity building, in the context of a risk-management approach to bushfire mitigation and management.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG supports strongly the importance of ongoing bushfire research and capacity building arrangements and recognises the need to consider the issue beyond the life of the Cooperative Research Centres. The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre was established in December 2002 and began its work in July 2003. It is in the early stages of its work and is funded until 2010. The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre aims to develop a comprehensive and overarching understanding of the behaviour and danger of bushfires, gives local differences in vegetation, land management and weather.</p> <p>COAG recognises the recent increased investment in bushfire research and the focus on coordination which includes, but is not limited to, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre. Other bodies engaged in bushfire-related research include the Tropical Savannas, Desert Knowledge and Spatial Information Cooperative Research Centres, the CSIRO, Geoscience Australia, the Forest and Ecosystem Science Institute, Victoria, the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, the University of South Australia, Australian National University, Melbourne University, University of Tasmania, Griffith University, Charles Darwin University, Deakin University and the University of Western Sydney. While it may be too early to decide on the future form of the ongoing research capacity required, the</p>

	<p>Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council is well placed to monitor the workings of bushfire research arrangements and the performance of research agencies drawing on information such as programmed reviews. COAG will request the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to develop a proposal for ongoing research timed no later than the five year review programmed for the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6.1 Risk modification The Inquiry endorses the recommendations in the Natural Disasters in Australia Report relating to disaster mitigation through land use planning and development controls and recommends that the states and territories continue to make their advisory and statutory measures more effective.</p>	<p>COAG Response Land use planning which takes account of natural hazard risks has been recognised as the single most important mitigation measure for preventing future losses from natural disasters. Work is already underway in the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council to address this issue and the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council is likely to become involved. COAG strongly supports Recommendation 6.1 and will request a report on progress through the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council, within twelve months.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6.2 The Inquiry recommends that the review of the Building Code of Australia, with particular reference to the <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas Standard</i>—to deal with resistance to natural hazards, including bushfires—be completed by the Australian Building Codes Board as a matter of priority.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG is concerned by the Report's observation concerning the delay in the review of the building code and in particular the <i>Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas Standard AS3959</i> by Standards Australia. COAG supports Recommendation 6.2 and notes that the Australian Government Minister for Industry Tourism and Resources will write to the Board identifying this review as a priority and reinforcing both the urgency for, and benefits of, encouraging Standards Australia to complete the revision of the Australian Standard that follows COAG's <i>Principles and Guidelines for National Standard Setting and Regulatory Action by Ministerial Councils and Standard-Setting Bodies</i> and its enactment through the Building Code of</p>

	Australia. The Board will be asked to resolve as soon as possible any other outstanding issues relating to the building code and natural hazards, including bushfires.
<p>Recommendation 6.3</p> <p>All states and territories should have a zoning approach to the classification of fuel management areas, with clear objectives for each zone. The process should be applied at the landscape scale, and all land managers and the community should be involved.</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG supports Recommendation 6.3. All jurisdictions reported that work is underway in this area. COAG recognises that zoning approaches may help to maximise the effectiveness of strategic prescribed burning. The Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Local government and Planning Ministers' Council will work together on this recommendation with a view to establishing arrangements for sharing information and enhancing approaches to zoning and classification of fuel management areas. The Primary Industries Ministerial Council, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council may also need to be consulted on this work. The Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council shall report back to COAG within 12 months.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6.4</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that fire agencies, land managers and researchers continue to work in partnership with Indigenous Australians to explore how traditional burning practices and regimes can be integrated with modern practices and technologies and so enhance bushfire mitigation and management in current Australian landscapes.</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG supports Recommendation 6.4, noting that traditional burning practices would have particular significance in some landscapes. Individual jurisdictions will continue efforts in this area drawing on the work undertaken by bodies such as the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7.1</p> <p>Readiness</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG agrees that the electronic and print media have an important</p>

<p>The Inquiry recommends that each state and territory formalise non-exclusive agreements with the Australian Broadcasting Commission as the official emergency broadcaster, providing an assured standing arrangement. Similar protocols with commercial networks and local media should also be established.</p>	<p>role in informing the community about bushfire mitigation and management in preparation for each bushfire season and in providing up-to-date information during bushfire events.</p> <p>Recommendation 7.1 calls for non-exclusive agreements with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation as the official emergency broadcaster and similar protocols with commercial networks and local media. COAG supports the recommendation and notes that all jurisdictions are working towards formalising agreements with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. COAG also supports the extension of these arrangements to commercial networks where feasible.</p> <p>Additionally, COAG notes that there are series issues of consistent information and cross-border overlap and coordination and that the Australian Emergency Management Committee is already working to address these as a priority.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.1 The Inquiry recommends that implementation of a single Incident Control System for the management of multi-agency emergency incidents be further examined by the Australian Emergency Management Committee, with a view to developing one nationally agreed system.</p> <p>Recommendation 8.2 The Inquiry recommends that the AIIMS Incident Control System be adjusted so that it adequately allows for the identification and integration of local knowledge during firefighting operations.</p>	<p>COAG Response A lesson learnt from the recent bushfires is that maximising effective response is a priority. The Report's recommendations in this area recognise the vital importance of control and coordination through the Australian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) Incident Control System. All fire services have agreed to the national adoption of the recently reviewed AIIMS and also all state emergency services (SES) have confirmed, through the Australian Council of State Emergency Services, that they will adopt AIIMS on a phased state by state basis.</p> <p>COAG supports Recommendation 8.1. The AIIMS has been adopted</p>

<p>Recommendation 8.3 The Inquiry recommends that a central function of the AIIMS Incident Control System be the flow of adequate and appropriate information to threatened communities, government, police and other emergency services authorities. The incident controller should have overall responsibility for this.</p> <p>Recommendation 8.4 The Inquiry recommends that all Australian fire authorities adopt and continue to use the AIIMS Incident Control System in accordance with Australasian Fire Authorities' Council guidance and policies.</p>	<p>by some emergency services agencies in all jurisdictions although further work, through the Australian Emergency Management Committee will be necessary. The work of the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council in providing the framework for cooperation between jurisdictions has been essential.</p> <p>COAG supports Recommendation 8.2 that the system be adjusted to include local knowledge during firefighting operations. COAG notes the progress in all jurisdictions to identify and integrate local knowledge into firefighting operations.</p> <p>COAG supports Recommendation 8.3 and notes that each jurisdiction is moving to implement the recommendation including the training of appropriate personnel. Jurisdictions will address training as a priority.</p> <p>With regard to Recommendation 8.4, COAG notes that all Australian fire services have adopted and continue to use the AIIMS Incident Control System in accordance with Australasian Fire Authorities' Council guidance and policies.</p> <p>COAG will request the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to monitor progress by jurisdictions in relation to Recommendations 8.1 to 8.4 and report on progress within 12 months.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.5 The Inquiry endorses the recommendations on warning systems in the report: <i>Natural Disasters in Australia</i>. In addition, it recommends as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that all fire ban advice and subsequent 'bushfire threat warnings' related to specific fires be conveyed 	<p>COAG Response Effective warnings are essential in mitigating and managing bushfires and other natural disasters. The <i>Natural Disasters in Australia</i> Report, prepared for COAG in 2002, placed considerable emphasis on warning systems in its recommendations and these have been accepted in principle by COAG.</p>

<p>consistently in all states and territories, including the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal when lives or property are threatened; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that the final structure of the warnings be based on the findings of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre's project Communicating Risk to Communities and Others. 	<p>COAG supports Recommendation 8.5 concerning the adoption of nationally consistent procedures for conveying fire ban advices and bushfire threat warnings. Action will be coordinated through the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council, in collaboration with the Bureau of Meteorology, towards achieving standardisation of fire ban advices.</p> <p>COAG notes the work currently being carried out under the auspices of the Australian Emergency Management Committee to develop draft guidelines for the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal when lives and/or property are threatened.</p> <p>COAG will request a progress report on these areas from the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council within twelve months.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.6</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that the Australian Government maintain leadership of and support for the National Aerial Firefighting Centre for a further three years, until the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre has finalised its research into the effectiveness of aerial suppression operations.</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>The Australian Government has already announced funding of \$16.5 million for the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (\$5.5 million per annum for the three years 2004-05 to 2006-07).</p>
<p>Recommendation 8.7</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that the approach that gives residents the option of leaving when confronted by a major bushfire threat or making an informed decision to stay and defend their home or property be adopted as a common 	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG recognises the importance of clear advice for residents during a bushfire, but notes that the message of 'go early or stay and defend' needs to be communicated carefully because in relation to other disasters it may not be appropriate to allow a resident to stay. The Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council will consider how</p>

<p>national policy; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> that implementation of a 'go early or stay and defend' policy must be fully integrated, with effective community education programs to improve preparedness and support timely and informed decision making. <p>Provision of training for fire, police and emergency services personnel in the application of the 'go early or stay and defend' policy is essential if this approach is to be applied safely—with particular emphasis on minimising evacuations at the height of fire events. This should be supported by formal agreements between the relevant authorities.</p>	<p>to implement a nationally consistent approach and provide guidance to jurisdictions on issues related to community information, training and warnings for disaster situations.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9.1</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that the <i>Australian Emergency Manual—disaster recovery</i> be updated as a matter of priority by Emergency Management Australia, in consultation with the states and territories, the Australian Local Government Association, the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Department of Family and Community Services, to incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the lessons learnt from the recovery programs undertaken in relation to the recent major bushfires; and the outcomes of by the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council's review of community support and recovery arrangements. 	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>The Report points out that recovery from major bushfires is little different from recovery from any other natural disaster and so should be considered, wherever possible, from an all-hazards perspective.</p> <p>An updated version of the nationally agreed framework for recovery, the <i>Australian Emergency Management Manual – disaster recovery</i> was published in September 2004. The Manual will be further reviewed over 18 months to address issues which emerge from the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council's Review of community support and recover arrangements, COAG's High Level Report <i>Natural Disasters in Australia: Reforming Mitigation, Relief and Recovery Arrangements</i> and COAG's <i>National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management</i>.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9.2</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that the Insurance Council of</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG notes the Inquiry's observations about significant levels of non-</p>

<p>Australia be asked to review the industry’s code of practice in response to the lessons learnt from the claims arising from the 2002–03 bushfires.</p>	<p>insurance and in particular under-insurance, and the need for the insurance industry to provide improved and more consistent advice to policy holders.</p> <p>There are also lessons to be learnt from the performance of the insurance industry including the need to provide comprehensive information and the balance between prompt settlement of claims and a cooling off period to allow for consideration and review of settlement offers.</p> <p>COAG supports the recommendation to raise these issues with the insurance industry. The Australian Government will write to the Insurance Council of Australia asking that a review of the industry's code of practice take account of the lessons learnt from the claims arising for the 2002-03 bushfires. This approach is consistent with actions planned in relation to COAG's Natural Disasters report.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10.1 Governance and coordination The Inquiry recommends that the Australian Government formalise the coordination of the development of policy on bushfire mitigation and management across Australian Government departments and agencies and the provision of advice to the Australian Emergency Management Committee and the augmented Australasian Police Ministers’ Council.</p>	<p>COAG Response Administrative arrangements put in place by the Australian Government involve a number of agencies in the various aspects of policy and operational work in relation to disaster mitigation, response and recovery. This reflects the diversity of functions and skills involved. The Australian Government expects these agencies to continue to work collaboratively to ensure the provision of coordinated advice to Government and to inter-jurisdictional bodies such as the Australian Emergency Management Committee and the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10.2 The Inquiry recommends that the Australasian Fire</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG supports Recommendation 10.2. The Australian Emergency</p>

<p>Authorities Council be co-opted as an adviser to the Australian Emergency Management Committee whenever bushfire mitigation and management are to be discussed.</p>	<p>Management Committee has recognised the value of advice that the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council can provide on fire-related issues, including bushfire mitigation and management. The operating arrangements agreed to by the Committee include express provision to coopt representatives of the Council when that would assist on discussion of relevant issues.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11.1 Knowledge, learning and training The Inquiry recommends that the Australian National Training Authority establish a National Safety and Security Skills Council to continue the development and administration of the Public Safety Training Package, including competencies and qualifications relevant to bushfire mitigation and management.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG acknowledges the importance of the development of arrangements to ensure availability of appropriate training for those involved in protection of public safety. The Public Safety Training Package which is funded by the Australian National Training Authority contains some 52 units of competency dealing with fire and 49 units covering emergency services. These units range in scope from operational to management and are directly linked to appropriate qualifications. The units have been developed after extensive consultations with peak bodies. The Package is reviewed regularly with scope to make changes to accommodate the latest technologies, additional skills or best practices. The skills areas identified by the Inquiry are covered by an Industry Skills Council and are sufficient to ensure the aims of Recommendation 11.1 are met.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11.2 The Inquiry recommends that the states and territories and the Australian National Training Authority provide additional funding, as necessary, to registered training organisations to support the development and delivery of learning and training resources to all firefighters.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG agrees that the need for appropriate training is essential and all jurisdictions will consider the resourcing of training needs as part of their normal budget processes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11.3 The Inquiry recommends that the Australasian Fire</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG supports the need for national coordination of leading practice</p>

<p>Authorities' Council and Emergency Management Australia—in partnership with state and territory agencies and other education and research institutions—coordinate a national program of professional development focused on bushfire mitigation and management. Under the program, partners would deliver nationally coordinated professional development services to all jurisdictions.</p>	<p>examples of professional development and recognises the work already being done by the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council and Emergency Management Australia in offering a range of programs in generic and specialist areas including emergency management and leadership development. COAG will direct the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to oversee the implementation of a nationally coordinated program.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11.4 The Inquiry recommends that the Council of Australian Governments support and fund the establishment of an Australian Centre for Bushfire Lessons Learnt, for an initial period of five years.</p>	<p>COAG Response The Report highlights the importance of ensuring that lessons learnt from bushfires should be shared. COAG supports a mechanism, possibly internet-based, to disseminate relevant data, resources, reports etc, on lessons learnt from bushfires. This need not involve the establishment of a new agency, as the function could be adopted as an additional role of an existing organisation and potentially collocated with an agency such as the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council, Emergency Management Australia or research organisations such as the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.</p> <p>COAG will direct the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council to develop this proposal further for consideration by jurisdictions in 2005, identifying any additional resources that may be required and focussing initially on bushfires but with consideration given to other hazards in due course. COAG notes the work currently being undertaken by the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre to act in this capacity in regard to fire management in northern Australia (including northern Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory).</p>
<p>Recommendation 12.1</p>	<p>COAG Response</p>

<p>Rural fire service volunteering</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that an opportunity for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses should be available for each volunteer rural fire agency. In addition, the Council of Australian Governments should decide on the question of tax concessions as raised in the paper prepared by PKF Chartered Accountants on behalf of the Western Australian Government.</p>	<p>COAG endorses strongly the Inquiry's acknowledgement of the vital and significant contribution emergency services volunteers make to the safety and well-being of Australian society. Recognition is an important part of volunteering but COAG recognises that proposals that seek to provide financial recognition for volunteers may not always be consistent with the volunteer ethos.</p> <p>Some jurisdictions have mechanisms for the provision of out-of-pocket expenses for volunteers but these are atypical and, in some cases, are limited.</p> <p>COAG considers the matter of recognition for volunteers be acknowledged as a general issue for consideration by individual governments. Further work to clearly identify what is currently done to recognise volunteers and what else might be done to strengthen recognition shall be undertaken by the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council with assistance from the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council, with a progress report on best practice to be provided to COAG within twelve months.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13.1</p> <p>Reviewing performance</p> <p>The Inquiry recommends that the states and territories agree to a common set of national bushfire indicators of good practice, based on the five mitigation and management factors it has identified—the 5Rs. These indicators, together with an assessment against the proposed national bushfire principles, would provide a consistent framework for review and reporting in each state and territory.</p>	<p>COAG Response</p> <p>COAG supports the need for a common set of national bushfire indicators of best practice. Some jurisdictions raised concerns about changing terminology from a PPRR (Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery) approach to a 5 Rs (Research information and analysis, Risk modification, Readiness, Response and Recovery) model, noting that the existing approach already forms the basis for reporting to the Productivity Commission, but agreed that a common set of indicators could be used irrespective of the terminology adopted.</p>

	<p>The indicators would need to reflect the proposed national bushfire mitigation and management principles and COAG will request that the development of indicators be pursued by the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council in conjunction with work on the principles over the next twelve months. Such work will need to draw on support from the Australian Emergency Management Committee and the Australasian Fire Authorities' Council. Individual jurisdictions will make decisions on how best to use the indicators for reporting and review of bushfire mitigation and management.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14.1 National principles for bushfire mitigation and management The Inquiry recommends that the Council of Australian Governments adopt a statement of national principles as the framework for the future direction of bushfire mitigation and management in Australia.</p>	<p>COAG Response COAG agrees on the importance of national principles which underpin existing approaches and set a framework that jurisdictions may wish to work towards.</p> <p>Such principles need to emerge from a process of consultation. The draft principles that have been identified could be agreed as a starting point with further consultation and any amendments necessary to be undertaken over the next twelve months, overseen by the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council. A report and recommendations on endorsement of a final set of principles will then be made to COAG.</p> <p>At the same time the Augmented Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council will be asked to look at the development of common indicators which reflect the principles, recognising that individual jurisdictions will make decisions about how best to use such indicators for reporting and review.</p>

Inquiry into the 2002-03 Victorian Bushfires

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Victorian Government Response</i>
<p>The changing Victorian environment Recommendation 2.61 That DSE and CFA as part of their long term planning, and in conjunction with the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, consider ways in which evidence for climate change and El Niño–Southern Oscillation cycle impacts on the likelihood of unplanned fire, can be better incorporated into preparedness and response planning.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle. Climate change evidence is difficult to assess due to annual variability. DSE, CFA and the Bureau of Meteorology will pursue this through the new Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).</p>
<p>Weather conditions before and during the fires of 2002-03 Recommendation 6.38 That DSE institute additional routine data storage and analysis to supplement current climate records with at least daily 3 pm values for the Grassland and Forest Fire Danger Index, and Keetch-Byram Drought Index, for selected high quality stations representing a cross-section of environments throughout Victoria.</p> <p>Recommendation 6.39 That DSE and CFA, recognising that the Bureau of Meteorology does not routinely store all variables required to produce the calculations and indices necessary for research and planning into fire occurrence and behaviour, develop appropriate systems to ensure that such current and historical information is readily available and accessible.</p>	<p>6.38 – Accepted.</p> <p>6.39 – Accepted. Additional data can always assist the development of predictive models. This could be done should resources and prevention priorities permit. The Bureau of Meteorology may also be able to assist here.</p>

<p>Fuel management in the high country Recommendation 8.25 That, according to available scientific evidence, a decision regarding cattle grazing in the High Country should not be based on the argument that ‘grazing prevents blazing.’</p>	<p>Accepted.</p>
<p>Fuel management in 'Mallee': techniques and approaches Recommendation 9.30 That if ‘link’ burns continue to be used, then on-site weather sequences and fuel conditions marking successful (‘within explicit prescription’) and unsuccessful burns be documented.</p> <p>Recommendation 9.31 That the success of current buffers in terms of assisting suppression operations be continually reviewed, evaluated and documented.</p> <p>Recommendation 9.32 That the creation of buffers by chaining and then burning swaths of mallee be explicitly monitored for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the risk of fire escapes during their establishment; • their effectiveness as a barrier to unplanned fire under various weather and fuel conditions; and • any adverse environmental effects such as soil mobilisation and loss of biodiversity. <p>Recommendation 9.33</p>	<p>9.30 – Accepted. This is currently occurring through the use of a portable weather station. However, there is scope for greater monitoring.</p> <p>9.31 – Accepted.</p> <p>9.32 – Accepted.</p> <p>9.33 – Accepted. An evaluation of the environmental impacts commenced last summer. A more comprehensive monitoring system will be developed.</p>

<p>That, as a result of this monitoring, weather conditions for the safe conduct of burning in such operations should be defined.</p>	
<p>Constraints on prescribed burning in forests Recommendation 10.65 That a review of the fuel management zones be implemented with a view to reducing the number of zones so as to focus clearly on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) asset protection (especially at the Public/Private land interface); and (ii) ecological burns. <p>Recommendation 10.66 That an explicit formulation of the interactions between terrain, fuel, ignition pattern, time of day and weather be created to better define those days suited to prescribed burning.</p> <p>Recommendation 10.67 That evidence of the rekindling or otherwise of spring prescribed burns in forests be assembled and a model constructed and tested to see whether or not some days in spring could be used for prescribed burning in certain circumstances and places, especially in Zone 1.</p>	<p>10.65 – Accepted. When the Code of Practice for Fire Management was first written it was acknowledged that fewer zones would be desirable. A reduction is linked, however, to improved understanding of the relationship between fire regimes and biodiversity. A review of the Code is expected to be completed by 2005.</p> <p>10.66 – Accepted. Fire agencies are committed to increased use of data and evidence to improve mitigation and prevention activities. This is a somewhat complex task and resource implications will need to be examined, particularly priority against other initiatives, such as the employment of more burning crews, increased training of crews and related technological developments that will improve hazard management.</p> <p>10.67 – Accepted. DSE already undertakes spring burning, particularly in Zone 1. Unexpected warmer weather between spring burns and summer remains a major concern however, and will be monitored closely.</p>
<p>How can we measure the effectiveness of prescribed burning? Recommendation 11.71 That DSE:</p>	<p>11.71 – Accepted. A new model for fire risk management which is being prepared for government consideration will address these issues. Additional training requirements will be considered in future budget processes.</p>

- Provide further training and/or field staff for the routine acquisition and reporting of geographic data (maps of fire extent for prescribed and unplanned fires) and fuel-array data (quantity, type, condition and arrangement before and after fire as in the Overall Fuel Hazard Guide).
- Routinely and explicitly report on measures of the effectiveness of the prescribed burning program.
- Measure the total area subject to prescribed burning treatment in each Fire Management Zone each year along with the average proportion of that area successfully burned.
- Develop an explicit, routine system of evaluation, analysis and reporting of the effects of prescribed burning in relation to environmental outcomes such as conservation of flora and fauna and water quality.
- Train more crews, use Project Firefighters more extensively (and CFA members or MFESB firefighters where appropriate), to undertake prescribed burning.

Recommendation 11.72

That DSE undertake a formal study of the level of prescribed burning in south western Australia for its possible application in Victoria by comparing respective fuel arrays, terrain, weather, ground access, staff, prescribed burning days, areas conducive to prescribed burning and fire response systems.

Recommendation 11.73

11.72 – Accepted. Western Australia practices are reasonably well understood but will be studied further.

11.73 – Accepted. DSE currently has this standard, through it is not always achieved. CFA will establish processes and systems to enable identified unplanned fires to be mapped.

<p>That DSE and CFA map all unplanned fires greater than four hectares on public and private land in order to further develop an understanding of the risk to rural Victoria from unplanned fires.</p>	
<p>Understanding bushfire options: the decision to stay or go? Recommendation 13.23 That CFA further develops the information supporting the decision to stay or go, to incorporate a better understanding of both the likely consequences of leaving home at inappropriate times, and the conditions and emotional impacts likely to be experienced during the passage of the fire front.</p>	<p>13.23 – Accepted. The CFA currently prepares comprehensive information and assistance to individuals and communities about fire preparation activities to help communities protect their properties from wildfire. The CFA will continue to work with communities to increase awareness of the likely consequences of the decision to stay or go.</p>
<p>Community education and information program Recommendation 13.53 That the three fire agencies (CFA, DSE and MFESB) develop and implement a joint statewide fire awareness education and information program aimed at encouraging a higher degree of personal and household self-reliance.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.54 That CFA should remain the lead agency in delivering the community education and information program to rural Victoria.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.55 That CFA and MFESB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct an annual survey of households to test the 	<p>13.53 – Accepted. The three fire agencies in Victoria provide a vital service to the community. However, there are a number of ways in which households can reduce the risk of fire. The CFA has been running programs, aimed at encouraging householders within rural areas to develop preparation and survival plans. While these educational campaigns have helped alleviate fire risk and provided guidance in times of fire danger. To ensure that we are as prepared as possible in the future and that consistent information is provided to households (regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas), the CFA, DSE and MFESB will work together to develop a joint state-wide fire awareness education and information program to encourage a higher degree of personal and household self-reliance.</p> <p>13.54 – Accepted.</p>

<p>level of awareness and acceptance of fire knowledge amongst Victorians; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly measure whether access to information leads to safe behaviours. <p>Recommendation 13.56 That the Coordinator-in-Chief of Emergency Management directs that all emergency management agencies review, by June 2004, terminology and language in current communication and public education material to ensure it is clear, easily understood and consistent, particularly with regard to fire.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.57 That CFA and MFESB encourage householders to review their fire safety plan annually.</p>	<p>13.55 – Accepted. CFA routinely conducts surveys, the reliability of measuring safe behaviours is most effectively measured through the CFA post incident analysis process.</p> <p>13.56 – Accepted.</p> <p>13.57 – Accepted. CFA will continue to work towards these objectives, in partnership with other agencies.</p>
<p>Community Fireguard Recommendation 13.75 That CFA, in conjunction with isolated small communities, develop and promote a suite of appropriate fire readiness and fire management strategies to meet their needs.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.76 That CFA reports to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on recommended solutions and implementation strategies for isolated small communities by June 2004.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.77 That CFA clarifies and restates the roles and function of</p>	<p>13.75 – Accepted. The Community Fireguard program recognises that on days of extreme wildfire danger, suppression capabilities are limited and the CFA cannot guarantee protection to each property. On those occasions, the key to community safety is the preparedness and response of the residents threatened. The CFA will continue to work with isolated communities and local government to further develop appropriate fire readiness and fire management strategies.</p> <p>13.76 – Accepted.</p> <p>13.77 – Accepted.</p> <p>13.78 – Accepted.</p>

<p>existing Community Fireguard Groups (including their relationship to the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan) to members, coordinators, Incident Controllers and Municipal Emergency Resource Officers, prior to the 2003-2004 fire season.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.78 That Community Fireguard Group coordinators' names are supplied to their local municipality for the 2003-2004 fire season, and are updated annually for use in information exchange should a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre or Incident Control Centre be established.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.79 That CFA provides technical advice to Community Fireguard groups in the selection and purchase of appropriate equipment and protective clothing for use on their own land.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.80 That CFA, recognising the value of the Community Fireguard Group program, undertake a review by June 2004 to identify opportunities to further develop the program to ensure its continuing appropriateness in preparing communities for fire into the future.</p>	<p>13.79 – Accepted.</p> <p>13.80 – Accepted. Detailed plans to implement the recommendations will be developed. Any additional resourcing requirements will be considered in future budget processes.</p>
<p>Public awareness communication systems Recommendation 13.93 That the Coordinator-in-Chief of Emergency Management directs the Media sub-committee of the State Emergency</p>	<p>13.93 – Accepted. CFA will take a lead role in the review.</p> <p>13.97 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Response Committee to review the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal and its accompanying message.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.97 That Victoria include an agenda item for both the National Emergency Management Committee and the National Meeting of Emergency Services Ministers recommending that the Australian Communications Authority review both the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice and Guidelines, and Community Broadcasting Codes of Practice, to ensure they provide necessary guidance and obligations on radio stations during emergencies and in relation to emergency warnings.</p>	
<p>Insurance as a preparedness measure Recommendation 13.103 That CFA, in their education and information packages, encourage appropriate insurance cover, and ensures that insurance becomes a part of the householders annual checklist.</p> <p>Recommendation 13.104 That Government works with the insurance industry to explore options for incentives such as a reduction in premiums for those who take appropriate self-protection measures on their properties, similar to incentives for anti-theft home security.</p>	<p>13.103 – Accepted. The loss of a home, property or stock as result of wildfire can be devastating. However, wildfire is, and should be, an insurable risk. Those members of the community who choose not to insure against fire, are effectively self-insurers and will bear the risk. It is important that individuals and communities are encouraged to manage this risk appropriately and insure all assets including fences, hay and standing fodder. The CFA will include, at the next appropriate review time, insurance related information on the household information packages and checklists.</p> <p>13.104 – Accepted in principle. The government encourages self-reliance within the community. However, there is a need to ensure that the Government does not interfere with the insurance market, and hence affect the affordability of insurance. The Government will examine with the insurance industry how it can progress this matter further.</p>

<p>Municipal fire prevention plan Recommendation 14.46 That, following the review of forest industry brigades, the <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i> be amended to ensure that the forest industry brigades, which are acting in an approved manner, have the same powers and rights as other brigades when attending fires on public land or interstate.</p> <p>Recommendation 14.47 That CFA should not be given the power to direct forest industry brigades to engage in fire prevention and suppression activities off their land, and that decision should remain the responsibility of the plantation company.</p> <p>Recommendation 14.57 That CFA and the Plantation Industry jointly develop and agree on Fire Prevention Guidelines for Plantations by June 2004, to be then promoted and distributed by the Industry.</p> <p>Recommendation 14.58 That Municipal Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure consistent approaches to planning for fire prevention and protection; and • consider existing rights of neighbours in planning development applications. 	<p>14.46 – Accepted.</p> <p>14.47 – Accepted.</p> <p>14.57 – Accepted. The document is complete and ready for publication. CFA will pursue guidelines for agricultural industries, and will consider resources and an appropriate timeline to achieve this.</p> <p>14.58 – Accepted. CFA, DSE, the Department of Victorian Communities (DVC) will work with Municipal Councils and the Victorian Emergency Management Council sub-committee (see Recommendation 14.93) and other stakeholders to ensure that there is a consistent approach to planning for fire prevention and protection across municipalities.</p>
<p>A new approach to municipal planning Recommendation 14.91 That Government review legislation for utilities operating</p>	<p>14.91 – Accepted.</p> <p>14.92 – Accepted. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services</p>

within the state to ensure their involvement in regional fire preparedness and mitigation planning.

Recommendation 14.92

That the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* be amended to:

- replace the current Municipal Fire Prevention Plan and the requirement for a Fire Prevention Committee with a Municipal Fire Management Plan, and Municipal Fire Management Committee; and
- bring together all stakeholders with an involvement in fire management for both private and public land within the municipality.

Recommendation 14.93

That the Victoria Emergency Management Council establishes a sub-committee by June 2004 to ensure an all-agency and appropriate industries' policy framework is developed and agreed in respect to the planning for fire prevention, mitigation and suppression.

Recommendation 14.94

That the new Municipal Fire Management Plan is informed by the policy directions of the subcommittee of the Victoria Emergency Management Council.

Recommendation 14.95

That the Municipal Fire Management Plan amendment includes appropriate provisions for the audit of the plans including:

- content;

will direct the Department of Justice to review the CFA Act, in consultation with the CFA, DVC, DSE and the MAV.

14.93 – Accepted.

14.94 – Accepted.

14.95 – Accepted.

14.96 – Accepted.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process of development and implementation; and • compliance reporting to the Victoria Emergency Management Council. <p>Recommendation 14.96 That the Government identifies an appropriate body, or bodies, to undertake the audit of the Municipal Fire Management Plans.</p>	
<p>External influences on fire agencies prior to the 2002-2003 fire season</p> <p>Recommendation 15.11 That DSE and the Department of Primary Industries formalise an agreement by the 2003-2004 fire season documenting the policies, procedures and financial arrangements relating to the availability of Department of Primary Industries staff to be trained and released for fire prevention and suppression activities on public land.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.12 That DSE investigates whether such agreements should exist with other government departments and agencies, particularly those with officers located in rural Victoria who may be involved in fire response and support operations in the future, based on their expertise and experience.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.13 That DSE commences discussion with the Victorian WorkCover Authority in respect to employer liability for those staff being released to, and directed by, another</p>	<p>15.11 – Accepted. DSE and DPI have already commenced work on the agreement, which is close to finalisation.</p> <p>15.12 and 15.13 – Accepted. Agreements with Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, DPI and the CFA currently exist or are being developed. Agreements with other agencies (eg DIIRD, DOI and VicRoads) will be actively pursued.</p>

<p>agency in fire prevention and suppression activities.</p>	
<p>Impact of the drought on water availability for firefighting Recommendation 15.23 That Government in the development of its statewide water policy includes appropriate consideration of access to water for firefighting.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.24 That communities, public land managers, Water Authorities and Catchment Management Authorities jointly identify and implement local and environmentally sound solutions to improve the availability of water for firefighting through the Municipal Fire Management Planning process.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.25 That the fire agencies develop contingency plans in relation to access to water for firefighting, including where appropriate, the use of static, large volume water tanks.</p>	<p>15.23 – Accepted.</p> <p>15.24 – Accepted.</p> <p>15.25 – Accepted. The fire agencies will work with Catchment Management Authorities and Water Authorities to develop appropriate contingency plans to improve access to water for firefighting during drought periods.</p>
<p>Agency resources Recommendation 15.40 That DSE and CFA review selection and training programs for Incident Controllers and Incident Management Team members to ensure that they include all necessary competencies in recognition that technical skills are only one component of the required attributes.</p>	<p>15.40 – Accepted. DSE, CFA and the MFESB will work together to enhance incident management capability.</p>
<p>Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding</p>	<p>15.54 – Accepted. Annual Statewide Fire Control Priorities are</p>

<p>Recommendation 15.54 That the Statewide Fire Control Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be developed annually by CFA and DSE; • be endorsed by the Victoria Emergency Management Council; • be incorporated into the co-operative agreement between DSE and CFA; and • inform the Fire Control Priorities in the Municipal Fire Management Plans. <p>Recommendation 15.67 That CFA continues to work with its Brigades to complete the integration of AIIMS-ICS with the Group Structure for full implementation by the 2004-2005 fire season.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.76 That the Victorian fire agencies negotiate with their counterparts in New South Wales and South Australia to put in place agreements for mutual aid and the development of cross border strategy for the management of fires burning in the vicinity of, or across, state borders, and these agreements are reviewed annually.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.77 That any local level agreements developed to address geographically specific risks or issues must be consistent with state-level arrangements.</p>	<p>currently developed annually by CFA and DSE and are incorporated into the cooperative agreement between DSE and CFA.</p> <p>15.67 – Accepted. CFA is working towards achievement of this program and will monitor progress toward full implementation.</p> <p>15.76 – Accepted. DSE has 'partial' border agreements already with NSW and SA. There is scope to broaden these however, and include non-adjacent states as well as other countries (in addition to the USA). DSE and CFA will actively and jointly pursue cross-border agreements with NSW and SA. These agreements will be extended to include cross-border fire management strategies.</p> <p>15.77 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Information management Recommendation 15.87 That Government supports the immediate development of</p>	<p>15.87 – Accepted in principle. A robust financial model is likely to be complex and no comprehensive wildland models currently exist. DSE will pursue the development of a robust model but a medium term time</p>

<p>financial models to analyse and determine the appropriate level of investment in fire management planning, preparedness and suppression on public land.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.88 That the financial models incorporate changes in public land use, particularly ‘Our Forests Our Future’, and the subsequent changes in fire management priorities.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.89 That the financial arrangements incorporate full cost recovery for prescribed burning to be undertaken over a number of weekends utilising Project Firefighters, CFA volunteers and MFESB members.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.90 That Government reviews the funding for DSE for the 2004-2005 fire season to ensure that appropriate resources are available for fire prevention planning and preparedness.</p>	<p>frame is likely to be more achievable.</p> <p>15.88 – Accepted.</p> <p>15.89 – Accepted. Work is already underway on the financial arrangements and principles subject to consideration of resourcing implications by government.</p> <p>15.90 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Roads and access tracks Recommendation 15.105 That DSE assesses the environmental and monetary cost of establishment and rehabilitation of temporary tracks, per 100 km, constructed during firefighting operations, and compare this with the recurrent costs of a program of maintaining existing tracks.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.106 That DSE includes the cost of tracks, as above, in the</p>	<p>15.105 – Accepted.</p> <p>15.106 – Accepted.</p> <p>15.107 – Accepted.</p>

<p>development of financial models to analyse and determine the appropriate level of investment in fire management planning, preparedness and suppression on public land.</p> <p>Recommendation 15.107 That DSE undertakes community consultation on policies relating to public land roads and access tracks, particularly in respect to fire management.</p>	
<p>Aerial firefighting strategy Recommendation 17.51 That an appropriately resourced, national aerial firefighting strategy is urgently required, and that the Victorian Government make representations to the Commonwealth to support the Australasian Fire Authorities Council recommendations.</p>	<p>17.51 – Accepted. Victoria will continue to work with other states and territories and the Commonwealth to achieve an effective national aerial firefighting capability.</p>
<p>Municipal emergency coordination Recommendation 18.12 That Incident Control Centres and Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres be collocated, wherever practicable.</p> <p>Recommendation 18.13 That DSE and CFA ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre is established in response to a fire, an appropriately experienced, trained and briefed officer of the control agency is appointed as liaison between the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre and the Incident Control Centre; and 	<p>18.12 – Accepted. The implementation of this recommendation will need to be managed in such a way so as not to diminish the effectiveness of ICC operation.</p> <p>18.13 – Accepted.</p> <p>18.14 – Accepted. DSE and the CFA will work with VicSES and Municipal Emergency Response Coordinators to develop and conduct joint exercises.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are appropriate training regimes in place to provide officers with the skills necessary to perform the role of Emergency Services Liaison Officer in the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre. <p>Recommendation 18.14 That DSE and CFA work in co-operation with the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinators to develop and conduct joint exercises that practise the skills and test procedures for operations of the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre, Municipal Recovery Centre and Incident Control Centres.</p>	
<p>Evacuation Recommendation 18.21 That Victoria Police ensure all police members understand the Victorian legislation in relation to evacuation, and that any decision to recommend evacuation remains with the Incident Controller.</p>	<p>18.21 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Divisional emergency coordination Recommendation 18.30 That existing DSE and CFA regional coordination arrangements be reviewed and any changes, such as the continued use of Integrated Multi-Agency Coordination Centres, be reflected in the Victorian emergency management arrangements.</p> <p>Recommendation 18.31 That Victoria Police, CFA and DSE review the relationship</p>	<p>18.30 – Accepted.</p> <p>18.31 – Accepted.</p>

<p>between fire service regional coordination arrangements and Divisional Emergency Response Plans and that any changes be formalised in the emergency management arrangements.</p>	
<p>State level coordination of emergency response Recommendation 18.42 That a single state-of-the-art all hazards State Emergency Operations Centre be established for Victoria. This could, if necessary, be implemented in stages, initially incorporating DSE, CFA, MFESB and the State Aircraft Unit.</p> <p>Recommendation 18.43 That the options of collocating the State Emergency Response Coordination Centre with the new State Emergency Operations Centre be explored.</p> <p>Recommendation 18.44 That the State Emergency Operations Centre develop and maintain strong and close links with the State Emergency Response Coordination Centre, if collocation is not possible.</p>	<p>18.42 – Accepted.</p> <p>18.43 – Accepted.</p> <p>18.44 – Accepted in principle. Further discussion with all relevant agencies will be required to develop effective links between this proposal, the State Crisis Centre and other operations centres.</p>
<p>Cooperation between agencies Recommendation 18.52 That the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> be amended to require the development of agreements that describe joint operational arrangements between emergency response agencies.</p>	<p>18.52 – Accepted.</p> <p>18.53 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Recommendation 18.53 That, wherever possible, Incident Management Team members from DSE, CFA and MFESB who are likely to be deployed together to manage fire, should train and exercise together.</p>	
<p>Deployment of Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Service Board personnel Recommendation 18.57 That the MFESB continue to give priority to appropriate bushfire training for its firefighters.</p>	<p>18.57 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Deployment of Victoria State Emergency Service Personnel Recommendation 18.61 That VicSES, with the support of the CFA, includes basic fire safety training as one of the competencies for the VicSES Volunteers.</p>	<p>18.61 – Accepted. This program is already underway. However, a tailored training program is required together with additional trainers to ensure timely roll out of the program.</p>
<p>Regional emergency coordination Recommendation 19.6 That the emergency management arrangements be amended to require Police Divisional Emergency Response Coordinators, in consultation with other response agencies, to establish and document procedures and structures at regional level in order to ensure there is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective monitoring of Incident Management Teams; • effective strategic management of resources; 	<p>19.6 – Accepted. During implementation particular attention will be paid to ensuring AIIMS-ICS fundamentals are not undermined and that clarity is maintained between the role of the response agency, and coordinators at a regional level.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • efficient management of information flow within and between agencies, and between the agencies and the community; and • liaison between the control agency and divisional and municipal emergency response coordinators. 	
<p>Structure of Incident Management Teams Recommendation 19.13 That the practice of appointing Deputy Planning Officer, Deputy Operations Officer and Deputy Logistics Officer in an Incident Management Team be abandoned. This recommendation acknowledges the benefits of retaining a Deputy Incident Controller from the support agency (in accordance with section 4.2.6 of the Emergency Management Manual Victoria), to ensure that the command structure of that agency is preserved.</p>	<p>19.13 – Accepted in principle. DSE and CFA are moving towards this type of structure. However, this requires integrated processes and systems that support decision making with appropriate information flow. Training and successional issues are also relevant here.</p>
<p>Qualifications for Incident Management Team members Recommendation 19.17 That the person appointed by DSE or CFA as Incident Controller for any incident should have formal qualifications and accreditation in the Incident Control System, be fully aware of the Victorian emergency management arrangements and have access to local fire prevention and response planning, including the Municipal Fire Management Plan.</p> <p>Recommendation 19.18 That CFA and DSE provide media training to all Level 2 and Level 3 Incident Controllers.</p>	<p>19.17 – Accepted. This is already current practice within DSE. CFA will further enhance the access to community/municipal fire plans that include local prevention preparedness response and recovery elements that will ensure the effective management of fires in local areas.</p> <p>19.18 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Incident Control Centres Recommendation 19.23 That in the review of Incident Control Centre locations, DSE and CFA give due consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existing public infrastructure that may provide suitable facilities; and • opportunities for collocation with Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres. <p>Recommendation 19.24 That DSE and CFA review their joint planning for Incident Control Centres to ensure that, wherever safe and practicable, those Centres are located close to the fire area.</p>	<p>19.23 – Accepted. The implementation of this recommendation will need to be managed in such a way so as not to diminish the effectiveness of ICC operation.</p> <p>19.24 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Transferring control from one Incident Control Centre to another Recommendation 19.29 That DSE and CFA develop an agreed process for the effective transfer of control from one Incident Control Centre to another, including processes for communicating this change to fire ground supervisors and local communities.</p>	<p>19.29 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Application of the Fire Control Priorities to incident action planning Recommendation 20.12 That CFA and DSE include agreed Fire Control Priorities in community awareness and education material provided to</p>	<p>20.12 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.13 – Accepted.</p>

<p>the community before each fire season.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.13 That the fire agencies ensure that Incident Action Plans developed by Incident Management Teams are consistent with, and built on, the agreed Fire Control Priorities.</p>	
<p>Aggressiveness of firefighting Recommendation 20.26 That DSE and CFA continue to stress firefighter safety as their highest priority for incident managers and fire ground supervisors.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.27 That DSE and CFA ensure that agreed strategy and tactics, and the rationale, be communicated to personnel involved in the fire fight and be included in briefings for fire line personnel.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.28 That personnel assigned the roles of Division Commander, Sector Commander and Strike Team Leader on the fire ground are actively encouraged to provide input into the selection of strategies and tactics.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.29 That personnel assigned the roles of Division Commander, Sector Commander and Strike Team Leader be given flexibility to alter tactics to take advantage of changed conditions on the fire ground.</p>	<p>20.26 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.27 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.28 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.29 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Consistency of strategy Recommendation 20.38 That when Incident Management Teams implement significant changes to objectives and strategies, these are effectively communicated to firefighters, fire ground supervisors and affected communities, and are incorporated into the broader organisational planning.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.39 That the ‘Incident Objectives’ established for any response should reflect the endorsed Statewide ‘Fire Control Priorities’, and the relevant Municipal Fire Management Plan.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.40 That CFA and DSE jointly develop procedures to ensure that a more consistent strategic approach can be maintained at shift and tour of duty changes.</p>	<p>20.38 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.39 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.40 – Accepted. The CFA and DSE are making significant progress in jointly developing procedures to ensure a more consistent strategic approach can be maintained at shift and tour of duty changes.</p>
<p>Use of Local Knowledge Recommendation 2 from the Interim Report That in preparation for the coming fire season, the CFA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modifies its operational procedures to ensure that local knowledge is flexibly and appropriately incorporated into tactical and strategic fire management; • modifies its operational procedures to allow for more flexible management of strike teams; and • continues to work with its brigades to complete the integration of AIIMS-ICS with the group structure. 	<p>Recommendation 2 from the Interim Report – Accepted. On 26 August 2003, the Government adopted all six recommendations from the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry Interim Report. The CFA has been working to modify its operational procedures to implement this recommendation.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 from the Interim Report – Accepted. DSE is reviewing its procedures to ensure that all Incident Controllers and Incident Management Teams have full access to appropriately experienced and qualified members of the community. The Department's Suppression Manual is being updated to reflect this.</p>

<p>Recommendation 3 from the Interim Report That DSE reviews procedures to ensure that all Incident Controllers and Incident Management Teams have full access to those Departmental, Parks Victoria or appropriately experienced and qualified community members who can provide local knowledge and expertise in the development of fire suppression strategies and that advice from the fire ground is incorporated into decision making.</p>	
<p>Information gathering Recommendation 20.54 That DSE and CFA review methods of gathering and processing fire information to ensure all methods are pursued to greatest effect.</p>	<p>20.54 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Briefings Recommendation 20.61 That DSE and CFA review the standards and protocols for documentation, including mapping, provided to fire line managers as part of their briefing notes, to ensure these are concise and appropriate.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.62 That operational briefings in multi-agency fires should, wherever possible, be joint briefings of all agencies involved.</p>	<p>20.61 – Accepted. Improved DSE protocols are currently being finalised. CFA will continue to develop processes and systems to provide appropriate operational information (ie. mapping) to Fireline Managers in a timely and accurate matter.</p> <p>20.62 – Accepted. This recommendation will be addressed in DSE/CFA pre-season briefings.</p>
<p>No Go Zones Recommendation 20.67</p>	<p>20.67 – Accepted. CFA and DSE agree that the use of the term 'No Go Zone' creates confusion and are reinforcing protocols to clarify</p>

<p>That DSE and CFA ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a clear process is established for determining whether a specific location is, or is no longer, a ‘no go zone’ or an area into which it is too dangerous to deploy resources, and that affected communities are advised as soon as possible of the determination, the reasons for such determination and what actions they should take as a result; and • where the Incident Management Team, Division Commander, Sector Commander and/or Strike Team Leader identify an area as a ‘no go zone’ or an area into which it is too dangerous to deploy resources, the reasons for that designation are recorded by the Incident Management Team in the incident log. 	<p>situations where communities and firefighting resources may be restricted due to safety concerns.</p>
<p>Use of bulldozers Recommendation 20.71 That DSE and CFA work cooperatively to review the management and application of bulldozers in fire suppression operations to ensure that they are used effectively, appropriately and are adequately supervised.</p> <p>Recommendation 20.72 That quality control or performance assessments are routinely completed post fire season, to ensure that contractors who have not performed to an agreed standard are not re-engaged for the consequential rehabilitation works.</p>	<p>20.71 – Accepted.</p> <p>20.72 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Keeping track of firefighting resources</p>	<p>21.8 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Recommendation 21.8 That DSE, CFA, MFESB and VICSES work co-operatively to establish a common system for resource tracking during major fires and incidents.</p>	
<p>Management of firefighting resources in the field Recommendation 21.14 That DSE and CFA review the management of personnel deployed ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shift changeovers of fire line personnel and fire line supervisors are conducted in such a way that the fire line is not left inappropriately unattended; • management protocols for Strike Teams are made more flexible; and • Strike Team Leaders and Task Force Leaders undertake refresher training in the management of resources under their control. 	<p>21.14 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Management of privately owned firefighting resources Recommendation 21.19 That, as a matter of urgency and in consultation with stakeholders, CFA and DSE develop and communicate clear guidelines on how and when privately owned firefighting equipment should be integrated into the fire response.</p>	<p>21.19 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Firefighting vehicles Recommendation 21.21 That CFA, having regard to terrain, continue to review the</p>	<p>21.21 – Accepted.</p>

<p>mix of firefighting appliances currently in service. In particular, consideration should be given to the number and distribution of smaller ‘slip-on’ type equipment.</p>	
<p>Communications facilities Recommendation 21.31 That DSE and CFA work with the Bureau of Emergency Services Telecommunications to ensure that rural communication issues are appropriately addressed in the Statewide Integrated Public Safety and Communications Strategy, and that priorities and business cases are agreed for critical issues.</p> <p>Recommendation 21.32 That CFA develop protocols to integrate Ultra High Frequency and Citizen Band radios into their communication structures.</p>	<p>21.31 – Accepted in principle. Implementation will be subject to consideration of a business case for a regional telecommunications strategy.</p> <p>21.32 – Accepted in principle. CFA needs to retain the integrity of their command and control of the VHF radio system. However, there is a need to integrate the UHF/CB non emergency service radio system to assist and manage resources on the fire ground.</p>
<p>Aircraft operations and the State Aircraft Unit Recommendation 22.60 That the joint agencies introduce a system of performance measures for reporting the effectiveness of aircraft in firefighting operations.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.61 That instances where demand for air support outstrips the supply of State Fleet Aircraft available are recorded.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.62 That after each fire season, measures of the effectiveness of</p>	<p>22.60 – Accepted.</p> <p>22.61 – Accepted.</p> <p>22.62 – Accepted.</p> <p>22.63 – Accepted.</p> <p>22.64 – Accepted.</p> <p>22.65 – Accepted.</p>

<p>aerial firefighting be collated, analysed and used for the assessment of the State Aircraft Fleet composition and the adequacy of Training and Accreditation programs.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.63 That a systematic performance audit of State Aircraft Fleet contractors be conducted jointly by agency and SAU personnel.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.64 That aviation contractors be required to submit a copy of their annual independent regulatory compliance audit prepared for Civil Aviation Safety Authority to the State Aircraft Unit.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.65 That training and competency programs for Incident Controllers should include aircraft firefighting capability training.</p> <p>Recommendation 22.66 That more emphasis should be given to communication and discussion in regard to State Aircraft Unit’s roles, responsibilities, practices and procedures.</p>	<p>22.66 – Accepted. DSE and CFA will continue to address these recommendations through the joint management of the State Aircraft Unit to ensure appropriate policy procedures and management processes are established for the holistic management of aircraft within Victoria.</p>
<p>The challenge: maintaining communication with all fire-affected communities Recommendation 23.21 That in relation to the provision of information to communities affected by fires and other emergencies, DSE</p>	<p>23.21 – Accepted. DSE and CFA will ensure that the information unit provides timely and accurate information to all stakeholders including incident management personnel, media and local communities, and that community information is a priority of Incident Controllers.</p>

<p>and CFA ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Management Teams understand that one of their primary responsibilities, in cooperation with the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator, is to keep the community informed as to where the fire is and its likely path, what is being done to combat the fire and any preparations the community should undertake; • Community Information Units are effectively integrated into the Incident Management Teams; and • they continue to develop a joint Internet-based communications tool to provide information and advice to both affected and broader communities during fires. <p>Recommendation 23.22 That the model of community engagement developed by DSE and CFA and applied during the 2002-2003 fires is further developed and refined, particularly in regard to short-duration, rapidly escalating incidents.</p> <p>Recommendation 23.23 That relevant Government agencies including Emergency Communications Victoria, the Bureau of Emergency Services Telecommunications and the Victoria Police Media Unit, evaluate the proposals put forward by the Australian Communications Authority with respect to the hearing impaired.</p>	<p>23.22 – Accepted.</p> <p>23.23 – Accepted. DSE and CFA will ensure that the information unit provides timely and accurate information to all stakeholders including incident management personnel, media and local communities, and that community information is a priority of Incident Controllers.</p>
<p>Radio coverage in rural Victoria</p>	<p>23.30 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Recommendation 23.30 That consideration be given to formalising Australian Broadcasting Corporation Local Radio as the official emergency radio station for Victoria, given it is the only radio station that can cover the whole of the state.</p> <p>Recommendation 23.31 That Victoria Police Media Unit coordinate work with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the emergency service agencies to implement this arrangement.</p> <p>Recommendation 23.32 That CFA and DSE work with Australian Broadcasting Corporation Local Radio to identify black spots, and explore opportunities to further improve coverage for broadcasting emergency information.</p> <p>Recommendation 23.33 That opportunities be explored to use community radio to complement other methods of communication with isolated communities.</p> <p>Recommendation 23.34 That Interstate Agreements prepared by the fire agencies be reviewed to include protocols for the joint release of consistent and appropriate information relating to fires burning across state borders.</p>	<p>23.31 – Accepted.</p> <p>23.32 – Accepted.</p> <p>23.33 – Accepted.</p> <p>23.34 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Overview of the recovery process Recommendation 24.29 That Municipal Emergency Resource Officers develop</p>	<p>24.29 – Accepted. Municipal Recovery Managers will ensure that volunteer registers are developed and maintained.</p>

registers of volunteers willing and available to provide assistance and support during the response to, and recovery from, emergency incidents.

Recommendation 24.30

That DPI actively promote as widely as possible within the community, the agricultural recovery service available during emergencies to ensure that all farmers are aware of the services provided.

Recommendation 24.31

That VicRoads and Municipal Councils review procedures and processes to ensure that the identification and delivery of remedial works on state and council roads following emergency events are as efficient as possible.

Recommendation 24.32

That the Victorian Government recommend to the Commonwealth Government that it reviews eligibility for those without employment who may or may not be engaged in an emergency response, and are unable to access the appropriate infrastructure to register for financial assistance.

Recommendation 24.33

24.33 That Government funding for Community Development Officers engaged in community support and rebuilding incorporates flexible resources to enable the purchase of services from a range of providers to ensure choice for those requiring support.

24.30 – Accepted. DPI, DHS and municipalities will consider case management as a method of managing the recovery of agricultural producers.

24.31 – Accepted. VicRoads and municipal councils will also consider the impact of their prioritisation on the local community.

24.32 – Accepted. DHS has already initiated discussions with Centrelink regarding this matter. CFA will liaise with DHS to ensure that CFA volunteers are eligible to gain employment support programs from the date of their fire engagement, not from the date of registration with Centrelink.

24.33 – Accepted.

24.34 – Accepted. DHS will remain the coordinating agency under Victoria's emergency management procedures and will support the Task Force in the event of an extreme natural disaster or other emergency event.

<p>Recommendation 24.34 24.34 That the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> be amended to include a provision that, on the recommendation of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services as Coordinator-in-Chief of Emergency Management, or of another Minister, the Premier establish a Ministerial Task Force to oversee recovery in situations of extreme natural disaster or other emergency events.</p>	
<p>Response and recovery: two sides of the same coin Recommendation 24.47 That recovery is recognised as commencing at the same time as response and that recovery planning and delivery is an integral part of the operations of the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres.</p> <p>Recommendation 24.48 That all departments, statutory authorities, utility providers and local governments be made aware of the need to develop contingency plans for recovery activities, and that such plans, and the associated public education and information strategies, are included in the Municipal Emergency Management Plans.</p> <p>Recommendation 24.49 That all agencies engaged in recovery participate in community briefings prior to and during emergency events, to ensure recovery issues are reinforced and communities are informed of the processes established to assist</p>	<p>24.47 – Accepted.</p> <p>24.48 – Accepted. A review of the State Emergency Recovery Plan is currently underway. The review will examine broader coordination structures and not just those limited specifically to the 'human services sector'. This would include economic, environment and infrastructure recovery.</p> <p>24.49 – Accepted. Significant stress can be reduced by the provision of appropriate information. DHS will provide advice, through its Clinical Advisors, on the appropriate format and languages for messages. The inclusion of recovery agencies in community and incident briefings during an emergency event is supported. This will assist a transparent movement from response to recovery utilising the same processes, systems and facilities wherever possible.</p>

<p>individuals – including matters that are not the responsibility of Victoria, such as Centrelink payments.</p>	
<p>Relief and recovery – predictable, equitable, consistent Recommendation 24.67 That Government review the emergency relief and financial assistance policy, and develop and communicate a predictable, consistent and equitable policy designed to assist the community to recover from emergencies, including natural disasters.</p>	<p>24.67 – Accepted. DHS has already convened an internal review to examine issues around grants payment and the application of the policy.</p>
<p>A case management approach to recovery Recommendation 24.76 That DHS, in conjunction with local government, government departments and the non-government sector, modify recovery planning at all levels to include a case management approach supported by an appropriate information system to be activated at the time of an emergency.</p> <p>Recommendation 24.77 That the Privacy Commissioner be asked for advice in the development of this model.</p> <p>Recommendation 24.78 That the State Emergency Recovery Committee explore opportunities to establish a 'one-stop-shop' approach wherever practicable following emergencies, including a single telephone number to connect a person to all agencies involved in the recovery process.</p>	<p>24.76 – Accepted. Work has already commenced on developing a model of application.</p> <p>24.77 – Accepted.</p> <p>24.78 – Accepted.</p>

<p>Fencing and rehabilitation – private land damage following fire suppression works Recommendation 4 from Interim Report That Government initiates a review of the fencing policy for boundary and internal fences damaged as a result of fire.</p> <p>Recommendation 5 from Interim Report That Government develops a consistent policy for the rehabilitation/restoration of private assets damaged or consumed in authorised fire suppression activity.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4 from Interim Report – Accepted. The government is currently conducting a review of its policy relating to the replacement of fencing destroyed during fires.</p> <p>Recommendation 5 from Interim Report – Accepted. The government is currently conducting a review of its policy relating to the rehabilitation/restoration of private assets damaged or consumed in authorised fire suppression activity.</p>
<p>The way forward: planning The balance between prevention/mitigation and response for public land Recommendation 25.23 That DSE, with adequate resourcing, moves to a 12-month cycle of fire management to establish and maintain a more appropriate and balanced work program of prevention/mitigation and suppression.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.24 When the research into prescribed burning and optimum fire protection described in Chapter 11, and the financial analysis of appropriate funding levels for prevention and suppression recommended in Chapter 15, are completed, DSE should develop a business case with Department of Treasury and Finance for assured funding to an agreed level over a three-year rolling cycle.</p>	<p>25.23 – Accepted. Ways of doing this and resource implications are currently under consideration by government.</p> <p>25.24 – Accepted. The timing of the business case has been advanced and is currently being finalised for government consideration.</p>

<p>Managing information Recommendation 25.37 That all emergency service agencies, CFA and DSE in particular, give greater priority to information management – especially the collection, maintenance and quality control of base data sets necessary for planning, operations and program evaluation.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.38 That Government acknowledge the importance of spatial information as a key element of planning, operations and program evaluation, and support the Geospatial Emergency Information Network as a means of ensuring integrated and coordinated information management on a whole-of-Government basis.</p>	<p>25.37 – Accepted.</p> <p>25.38 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Model of fire cover – 'Fire Safety Victoria' Strategy Recommendation 25.55 That Government confirms that the Model of Fire Cover/Fire Safety Victoria strategy should be a seamless model for the whole of the state and include both private and public land.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.56 That DSE commit appropriate resources to work with OESC in developing the bushfire component of the model.</p>	<p>25.55 – Accepted.</p> <p>25.56 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Planning for emergencies at the local level Recommendation 25.88 That CFA, DSE, MFESB, VicSES, Victoria Police and</p>	<p>25.88 – Accepted.</p> <p>25.89 – Accepted.</p>

<p>OESC, in consultation with the Municipal Association of Victoria, consult on the proposal to combine Municipal Councils' current responsibilities for the development of an emergency management plan/committee, as required by the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> and a fire prevention plan/committee as required by the <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i>.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.89 That this group reports to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on proposed legislative amendments to the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i>, the <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i> and any associated legislation by June 2004.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.90 That CFA, DSE and MFESB continue to develop the partnership approach for fire safety with local government, industry and communities.</p>	<p>25.90 – Accepted.</p>
<p>Human resources Recommendation 25.114 That, as a matter of urgency, CFA and DSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop strategies to provide adequate and sustainable firefighting resources, suitably trained and experienced; and • advise Government of these strategies. <p>Recommendation 25.115 That all fire agencies include a formal mentoring scheme as</p>	<p>25.114 – Accepted. In relation to DSE, work on the development of these strategies is well underway, with discussions with government due to commence shortly.</p> <p>CFA and DSE have ongoing programs of human and physical resource planning and management, and will continue to work with government to ensure ongoing sustainability.</p> <p>25.115 – Accepted. DSE and CFA are working to ensure that personnel undertaking key incident management roles are trained,</p>

<p>part of their workforce development programs; and that consideration be given to the use of suitably competent and experienced individuals (such as retired staff), to act as coaches or mentors with inexperienced Incident Controllers.</p> <p>Recommendation 25.116 That CFA, VicSES and other volunteer-based emergency service organisations develop proposals in support of the strategies for sustainable volunteerism, and that the State Government advocate these initiatives to the Federal Government.</p>	<p>skilled and competent to perform required tasks, and mentoring will be incorporated as part of the training process.</p> <p>25.116 – Accepted. The Department of Victorian Communities will also contribute to the development of the proposals.</p>
<p>The way forward: unified command and control Response to the CFA proposal</p> <p>Recommendation 26.52 That CFA, DSE, MFESB and Victoria Police jointly develop a unified command and control system that better integrates with the state's emergency management arrangements, and that this be endorsed by the Victoria Emergency Management Council by July 2004.</p> <p>Recommendation 26.53 That this unified system include recommendations for the appointment of one person or agency to be responsible for overall control of fire suppression activity in country Victoria, including for any legislative reform considered necessary.</p> <p>Recommendation 26.54</p>	<p>26.52 – Accepted. DSE and CFA plan to build on and improve existing arrangements in light of this report.</p> <p>26.53 – Accepted in principle. The government will work closely with the relevant agencies to further develop the proposal.</p> <p>26.54 – Accepted. Desirably all relevant agencies should be included. The role should be high level command and coordination, since individual agencies will still require small centres for smaller incident management and for detailed operational and logistical requirements. The possibility of rotation of the management of a common complex around the agencies will be explored</p> <p>26.55 – Accepted.</p> <p>26.56 – Accepted. DVC will also be included in this process of review.</p>

That a State Emergency Operations Centre be established to replace the existing separate fire agency centres. This could, if necessary, be initially confined to being a State Fire Operations Centre as recommended in Chapter 18, Part D.

Recommendation 26.55

That the review of emergency operations centres by the Departments of Premier and Cabinet and Treasury and Finance and the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner:

- explore opportunities to significantly reduce the number of regional emergency operations centres; and
- evaluate opportunities to pre plan and establish ‘all hazards–all agencies’ emergency operations centres at the regional or district level.

Recommendation 26.56

That in doing so, this review must consult with the agencies mentioned above, and others such as VicSES and the Departments of Human Services and Primary Industries.

Recommendation 26.57

That the Fire Management Branch of DSE be prescribed as an ‘emergency service agency’ for the purposes of s21C (1)(a) of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

Recommendation 26.58

That the fire agencies develop a program to significantly increase the amount of joint training and exercises

26.57 – Accepted.

26.58 – Accepted.

26.64 – Accepted. The OESC will work with the fire agencies and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

undertaken.

Recommendation 26.64

That OESC will work with the fire agencies in developing implementation strategies for recommendations agreed by Government.