

<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.1</p> <p>The State ensure that bushfire warnings issued in Victoria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ are founded on the principle of maximising the potential to save human lives; ▪ embody the principles encapsulated in Recommendation 8.5 of the Council of Australian Governments report, the <i>National Inquiry on Bushfire Mitigation and Management</i> (2004); ▪ embody the principles endorsed in the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council Draft Discussion Paper, <i>A National Systems Approach to Community Warning</i> (May 2009); and ▪ incorporate the use of the Common Alerting Protocol, as adapted for the Australian context. 	<p>Support. The Government will introduce the Common Alerting Protocol for the coming fire season.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.2</p> <p>The State ensure that the content of bushfire warnings issued in Victoria reflects the principles set out in the Commonwealth policy paper <i>Emergency Warnings — Choosing Your Words</i> (2008). In particular, all bushfire warnings issued in Victoria must use clear language, avoid euphemisms, and contain explicit information in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the severity, location, predicted direction and likely time of impact of bushfires on specific communities and locations; and ▪ the predicted severity of impact of the bushfire and whether a specific fire poses a threat to human life. 	<p>Support. Warnings will be based on the principle of maximising the potential to save lives and will be consistent with Commonwealth standards.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.3</p> <p>The State commission research into the development of a new fire severity scale that denotes the risk posed by dangerous and extremely dangerous bushfires (similar to the cyclone categories 1 to 5).</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.4</p> <p>The State ensure bushfire warnings in Victoria are confined to two categories or stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bushfire Information — a message providing information to the community on a bushfire that is ‘going’ and has the potential to threaten public safety; and ▪ Bushfire Warning — a warning to the community about any dangerous or extremely dangerous bushfire, particularly one that is burning out of control and poses a threat to human life. 	<p>Support in relation to a fire that has the potential to threaten public safety (noting there will still be a need to keep the community informed about non-threatening fire activity including fuel reduction burning by fire agencies). The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) is currently reviewing fire warning scales and messages which may affect the implementation of this recommendation.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.5 The State ensure that the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) be used in Victoria to precede each bushfire warning or group of warnings for bushfires that are dangerous or extremely dangerous, particularly for a fire that is burning out of control and poses a threat to human life, subject to appropriate limits on the maximum frequency of use.</p>	<p>Support. The State will develop a protocol with emergency broadcasters to ensure the signal is only broadcast before warnings about life threatening fires and, on extreme fire days, the frequency of its use is limited so as not to undermine the effectiveness of warnings. Note. On Feb 7 the use of SEWS for all warnings would have resulted in its use on 510 occasions on the ABC.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.6 The State invite commercial operators to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), similar to its MOU with the ABC, on the dissemination of bushfire warning messages and the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal by those operators.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.7 The Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and the CFA develop guidelines for the use of sirens in communities that decide to use a siren as part of their response to bushfires.</p>	<p>Support the development of guidelines and use where an existing CFA siren is available.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 4.8 The Australian Government, Council of Australian Governments and the State determine whether it is technically possible to implement the second phase of the national telephony-based warning system (that is, the delivery of warning messages to mobile phones based on the physical location of a handset at the time of the emergency) with a view to implementation for the 2009–10 bushfire season.</p>	<p>Support, noting implementation is subject to technical feasibility and the ability of telecommunications carriers to deliver. The Government has been working with all jurisdictions to establish the National Emergency Warning System. The system’s first phase will be in place for the next bushfire season and is designed to send voice and text messages to all landlines and mobiles where the billing address is in a designated area. Research is underway to determine the feasibility of the technology to send a message based on the location of mobile telephones, but it is highly unlikely that this technology could be implemented for the coming fire season.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 5.1 The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and the Bureau of Meteorology collaborate with researchers to explore options for the fire danger indices and fire danger ratings including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an additional fire danger rating beyond ‘Extreme’; ▪ adjusting the existing fire danger ratings to correspond to higher Fire Danger Index values; and ▪ developing a revised fire severity scale for use in bushfire warnings based on new fire danger ratings. 	<p>Support, noting that this is a National matter. Victoria agrees with the Commission’s view that any new system must be simple and readily understandable by the community.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 5.2 The Bureau of Meteorology include the Forest Fire Danger Index and the Grass Fire Danger Index in its fire weather warnings and general weather forecasts on its website and in material distributed to the media.</p>	<p>Support, while noting this recommendation is directed to the Bureau of Meteorology.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 5.3 The State ensure that a single, multi-agency portal for bushfire information be established that uploads information simultaneously to both CFA and DSE websites.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 5.4 The State ensure that the single multi-agency portal for bushfire information be designed to allow Incident Control Centres to directly post information and warnings.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 5.5 The State ensure the Victorian Bushfire Information Line is funded to enable it to provide greater surge capacity during extreme events and to improve the efficiency of its internal information function.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6.1 The State amend the <i>State Emergency Response Plan</i> so that the word relocation is used in preference to the word evacuation (except in cases where evacuation is clearly more appropriate).</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6.2 The CFA amend its policy <i>Advice to the Community Before and During Wildfire</i> to enable trained CFA personnel to recommend to particular households, communities or locations that they plan to leave early, based on an assessment of defendability, the vulnerabilities of the people there, and the degree of ease with which people are able to leave the area in relative safety.</p>	<p>Support. The CFA is developing a self-assessment tool to assist residents to assess the defendability of their homes. This will be supported by additional CFA community fireguard and fire ready activities. This recommendation has been considered with reference to recommendation 7.2.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6.3 The CFA and DSE amend operational policies to require the Incident Controller to assess whether relocation should occur and to recommend relocation when warranted.</p>	<p>Support, noting that guidelines will be developed to assist Incident Controllers and emergency services workers. Relocation recommendations will only be issued where an Incident Controller determines and is fully satisfied that people can relocate safely.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 6.4 Municipal councils review their Municipal Emergency Management Plans to ensure there is appropriate provision for relocation during bushfires, in particular, to indicate the location and arrangements associated with designated emergency relief centres.</p>	<p>Support while noting that this recommendation is directed to councils.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 7.1</p> <p>The CFA revise the publications and programs by which it communicates with the community about preparing for bushfires and what to do in the event of a bushfire to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reinforce existing advice that community members should prepare, and decide, well before a fire occurs, whether to leave early or stay and defend their homes; and ▪ clearly convey the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the safest option is always to leave early rather than to stay and defend, ○ not all homes are defendable in all circumstances and householders are advised to undertake an individual assessment of defendability, ○ unless a property is defendable the advice is to leave early, ○ the impact of topography, fire weather and fire intensity on defendability should be factored into household assessments, ○ the risks of staying to defend include the risk of physical injury and death, ○ contingencies are needed as the best-made plans may fail, ○ even if a plan is to stay, preparations to enable leaving should also be made, including the preparation of a ‘relocation’ kit specifying the location of designated community fire refuges, ○ there could be psychological impacts of staying to defend a property, ○ it is inadvisable for children to be present during the defence of properties, ○ practical steps are needed to protect the vulnerable. Families with young children, older people, and disabled people are advised to plan for early relocation, ○ advice on triggers for when to leave to incorporate the need for flexibility, the dangers of leaving late and the undertaking that a warning may not be received, and ○ advice in relation to the policy specifically targeted to urban communities on the urban/rural interface. 	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 7.2</p> <p>The CFA consider the means of providing individual advice to residents in bushfire prone areas, as to the defendability of their homes.</p>	<p>Support. See response to Recommendation 6.2 above.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 7.3</p> <p>The CFA ensure its members are fully trained as to the changes to the advice to the community set out in Recommendation 7.1.</p>	<p>Support. The CFA will provide training and briefings to personnel on the changes prior to the 2009-10 fire season.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 7.4</p> <p>The CFA train facilitators and educators and ensure manuals, brochures and other materials are enhanced to incorporate changes to the advice to the community in relation to the ‘stay or go’ policy and the changes recommended elsewhere in this report.</p>	<p>Support.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 7.5 The State and its agencies implement an advertising and awareness campaign on the changes to policy and practices as set out in this report, such as the Standard Emergency Warning Signal, telephony-based warning system, use of sirens by local communities, refuges and relocation.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.1 The CFA report to the Commission on the outcome of the trials of the Victorian Fire Risk Register and progress with its implementation.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.2 The Municipal Association of Victoria report to the Commission on the progress of amendments to Municipal Emergency Management Plans by those municipal councils trialling the Victorian Fire Risk Register.</p>	<p>Support, noting that this is a recommendation directed to the MAV.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.3 The CFA give priority where possible to provide resources to assist in the defence of designated community fire refuges and neighbourhood safer places at times when they are likely to be in use.</p>	<p>Support, recognising that the CFA will allocate resources to where human life can be best protected. For example, where human life can best be protected through the successful control of a fire, then resources will be allocated accordingly.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.4 The State replace the 2005 <i>Fire Refuges in Victoria: Policy and Practice</i> following its current review by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.5 The State promulgate criteria for the identification and operation of neighbourhood safer places, and involve councils and local communities in their development and implementation as appropriate.</p>	<p>Support and endorse the Commission's emphasis on a new approach to last resort options, in particular to move away from an exclusive focus on purpose built structures as refuges towards permitting the use of existing venues and open spaces.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.6 The State to have commenced progressively identifying, establishing and advertising designated community refuges and neighbourhood safer places, giving priority to areas where bushfire risk is identified as high.</p>	<p>Support while noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priority for the establishment of neighbourhood safer places will be given to the 52 identified high risk areas • the CFA will assist other councils in other areas to identify and establish neighbourhood safer places where local resources permit • it is unlikely any new refuge structures can be established prior to the coming fire season. <p>The Government will introduce legislation before the end of the year to require municipalities to include the identification of neighbourhood safer places in their Municipal Fire Prevention Plans and Emergency Management Plans (note: exemptions can be provided if this is geographically impossible in a given location).</p> <p>The CFA and local government will jointly ensure that the location of neighbourhood safer places is well publicised.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.7 Municipal councils record the location of designated community fire refuges and neighbourhood safer places in Municipal Fire Prevention Plans and Municipal Emergency Management Plans, and inform residents and visitors about their use and location.</p>	<p>Support noting that this recommendation is directed towards Councils.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.8 The State to have developed uniform signs for designated community fire refuges and neighbourhood safer places in Victoria.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.9 The CFA maintain an up to date, state-wide list showing the precise location of all designated community fire refuges and neighbourhood safer places, and provide the list to DSE, Victoria Police, the State Emergency Service, the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, and the Victorian Bushfire Information Line.</p>	<p>Support. CFA will update this list from Council developed Municipal Fire Prevention Plans.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.10 The State report to the Commission on the results of the implementation and effectiveness of its township protection plan program and neighbourhood safer places program.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.11 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development complete a review of all refuges in all schools in areas at risk of bushfire.</p>	<p>Support.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.12 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development give priority to rectification works to refuges identified in the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority report.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 8.13 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development review the adequacy of bushfire fire protection measures in children’s services facilities including kindergartens, child care centres, preschools and early learning centres.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9.1 The State ensure that State Duty Officers of the CFA and DSE be given direct responsibility for ensuring pre-designated level 3 Incident Control Centres within their respective control are properly staffed and equipped to enable immediate operation in the case of a fire on high fire risk days.</p>	<p>Support while noting that the capacity to implement this recommendation will be dependant on the number, spread and severity of fires on an extreme fire risk day. Fire agencies are currently working to expand the number of level 3 incident controllers.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9.2 The CFA and DSE agree procedures to ensure the most experienced, qualified and competent person is appointed as Incident Controller for each fire, irrespective of the point of ignition of the fire.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9.3 The CFA and DSE ensure that where a level 3 Incident Controller or officer of equivalent ranking is satisfied that a bushfire warning is required, then such Incident Controller is authorised to release a warning where the designated Incident Controller is temporarily unavailable.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9.4 The State amend the <i>Country Fire Authority Act 1958</i> to provide that the Chief Officer has responsibility to issue warnings and provide information to the community concerning the risk of bushfires.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 9.5 The CFA effect a standing delegation of the responsibility for providing information and issuing warnings to the DSE Chief Fire Officer where a fire is directed to be under the control of a DSE Incident Controller.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.1 The State amend the <i>State Emergency Response Plan</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ so the control agency for a fire is responsible for issuing and communicating warnings; and ▪ to remove from emergency response coordinators the responsibility of ensuring the control agency gives consideration to alerting the public to dangers and potential dangers arising from an emergency. 	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.2 The State revise the <i>Emergency Management Manual Victoria</i> consistent with the interim report recommendations in relation to the ‘stay or go’ policy, warnings and relocations.</p>	<p>Support.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.3 The State settle the higher level emergency management and coordination arrangements that will apply during the bushfire season, noting that the Commission intends to take evidence on longer-term arrangements during its 2010 public hearings.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.4 The State report to the Commission on the outcome of the current review by Victoria Police of the <i>State Emergency Response Plan</i>.</p>	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.5 Victoria Police, in consultation with CFA and DSE, review the guidelines for the operation of roadblocks during bushfires, including how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ formulate the terms of a discretion to police on roadblocks to allow entry to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ residents returning to their homes; ○ people delivering relief and aid to residents and to animals; ○ essential services crews; and ▪ expedite the exercise of the discretion in favour of persons able to establish their bona fides. 	<p>Support.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 10.6 The CFA and DSE amend operating protocols to ensure that when an Incident Controller requests Victoria Police establish a roadblock to an area threatened by a bushfire, the Incident Controller simultaneously issues a bushfire warning to residents of that area.</p>	<p>Support when such a warning is considered necessary for the protection of human life.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 11.1 The Commonwealth facilitate discussions between relevant Commonwealth agencies (including Emergency Management Australia, Defence, Defence Imagery Geospatial Organisation and Geoscience Australia) and state and territory fire services to identify ways in which Commonwealth resources might be applied more rapidly and effectively during extremely dangerous bushfires, including investigating the potential for these resources to be used for detecting, tracking and suppressing bushfires.</p>	<p>Support, noting the considerable benefit to the people of Victoria if Commonwealth resources are available for rapid deployment to assist in detecting, tracking and suppressing bushfires.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 11.2 The Commonwealth, through Emergency Management Australia, provide briefings at least once a year to state and territory agencies regarding arrangements available (including through Defence) to support jurisdictions during disasters and emergencies, including bushfires. State and territory representatives should advise relevant Ministers and the Chief Officers of emergency services (including fire services) of the outcomes of these briefings.</p>	<p>Support. Victoria welcomes any assistance available from Commonwealth agencies to assist in its bushfire response.</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 12.1 The Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner formally advise the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority and Telstra Triple Zero of forecast severe fire risk days and particularly days where there is a risk of extremely dangerous bushfires.</p>	<p>Support.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATION 12.2 The State ensure the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) is funded to provide greater surge capacity during extreme events, including establishing additional work stations for fire calls at ESTA centres.</p>	Support.
<p>RECOMMENDATION 12.3 The State further promote, through the Council of Australian Governments, more effective emergency call service arrangements throughout Australia.</p>	Support.