



ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORONER'S
COURT IN**

**THE CANBERRA FIRESTORM: INQUEST AND INQUIRY
INTO FOUR DEATHS AND FOUR FIRES BETWEEN 8
AND 18 JANUARY 2003**

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Attorney General and Minister for Police and Emergency Services
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ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CORONERS REPORT INTO THE 2003 CANBERRA FIRESTORM

INTRODUCTION

On 18 January 2003 devastating fires swept through the ACT resulting in the deaths of four people and significant losses to both private and public property and infrastructure, including the loss of 500 homes. It is estimated that the cost to the ACT of some \$600million represents one of the worst natural disasters in Australia's history.

Section 57 of the *Coroner's Act 1997* provides for the Coroner to make recommendations to the Attorney General on any matter connected with an inquest, including matters relating to public health or safety.

The ACT Coroner, Ms Doogan, commenced a coronial inquest into this firestorm and the deaths of four people, Mrs Dorothy McGrath, Mrs Alison Tener, Mr Peter Brook, and Mr Douglas Fraser in 2003. On 19 December 2006, Coroner Doogan delivered her report and made a total of seventy three recommendations. These recommendations are wide and varied, but focus primarily on more effective communication systems for use between the services; the development of integrated bushfire management plans between the Emergency Services Agency and land management agencies; greater emphasis on effective training of all personnel involved in incident management; development of a systematic review and maintenance of fire trails; development of a risk management approach to incident management and a review of the *Coroner's Act 1997*.

The government has now considered the Coroner's report and its recommendations in detail. This paper sets out the government's response and discusses the strategies, programs, policies and procedures that have been implemented and are in the process of being implemented to improve the operational effectiveness of the Emergency Services Agency and land management agencies in the planning for and suppression of major fires.

The government's response will be supported by the release of the Emergency Services Agency Three Year Business Plan for 2007 – 2010, which will be released by the Commissioner in early March 2007 and which will detail the strategic direction the Agency will be taking in consolidating its policies and practices to further improve its operational effectiveness and its relationships with its key stakeholders . Key priorities for the next three years focus on:

- Operational Response Capability
- Risk Based Resource Allocation
- Training
- Recruitment, Retention and Industrial Relations
- Fleet and Facilities management
- Governance Enhancement

- Public Awareness and Community Education
- Emergency Services Agency Headquarters

The government has, since committing to the implementation of the sixty one recommendations from the McLeod Report, injected substantial additional funding into the Emergency Services Agency budget since 2002/2003. Additionally the government has increased funds to land management agencies.

The government continues to support the Emergency Services Agency and key stakeholders in delivering resources and infrastructure to build and maintain effective firefighting expertise across the ACT and the communities that lie within its borders. Since 2003, the government has supported the creation of 28 Community Fire Units (CFU) comprising some 700 volunteers. Each Unit is equipped with CFU trailers, fire-fighting equipment and protective clothing, with volunteers trained and supported by ACT Fire Brigade firefighters from local fire stations. Units have been established in Aranda, Campbell, Chapman, Cook, Curtin, Duffy, Kambah and O'Connor Ridge.

Further, the ACT Government has worked closely with the Emergency Services Agency to improve many facets of its business; these include the ACT All Hazards Warning System and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with all local Media ensuring more appropriate dissemination of information to the community during emergency incidents.

An arrangement whereby the ACT locates a minimum of 2 helicopters at the Canberra Airport has been implemented through the National Aerial Firefighting Committee, improving rapid response to bushfires. A number of memoranda of understanding (MOU's) with New South Wales to enhance cross border relationships have been finalised, including with NSW Rural Fire Service, the NSW Fire Brigade, NSW State Emergency Services and the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.

The development of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan has allowed for a ten-year forward view of bushfire management arrangements within the ACT, which has built stronger working relationships between the Territory land managers and the two fire services. Public education surrounding emergencies remains a major focus for the Emergency Services Agency which has over the past three years distributed a number of publications on hazard reduction around the home and preparing homes for various types of emergencies.

The government agrees with sixty one (61) of the Coroner's recommendations, thirty two (32) of which have already been implemented, with some being annual and ongoing commitments. Nineteen (19) have been partially implemented; ten (10) of the recommendations are yet to be implemented. Of the remaining 12 recommendations, the government disagrees with eight (8), and four (4) are subject to the outcome of the review of the Coroner's Act.

Recommendation 1

I recommend that the Attorney-General and the ACT Government – in consultation with the Chief Justice of the ACT and the ACT Chief Magistrate – take legislative action that would have the effect of funds being directly appropriated annually to the courts, preferably along the lines of the Commonwealth model as it applies to the High Court of Australia, the Federal Court of Australia, the Family Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court. Alternatively, the funds be could be appropriated in accordance with the South Australian model, which has a separate Courts Administration Authority.

Not agreed

The government strives to support and assist the courts by providing administration and infrastructure, while at all times respecting the principles of judicial independence.

Establishment of a separate Courts Administration Authority in the ACT would unnecessarily duplicate administrative support functions and would increase the cost to ACT taxpayers of administering the courts. Particularly in a small jurisdiction such as the ACT, the additional costs and administrative infrastructure would be difficult to justify. All other states and Territories (except SA) resource and manage their courts from within their justice departments.

The government, with support from the judiciary, established the Courts Governance Committee, which provides a forum in which the judiciary, Attorney General and the department can consider matters of importance. The Courts Governance Committee meets quarterly.

Recommendation 2

I recommend that the ACT's *Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1990* be amended by repealing s. 6(d) of the Act.

Awaiting outcome of a review

This matter will be considered in the review of the *Coroners Act 1997* arising from recommendation 6.

Recommendation 3

I recommend that s.59 of the ACT *Coroners Act 1997* be amended by deleting the words 'by instrument' in s. 59(1) and by deleting the words 'by his or her instrument of appointment' in s.59(2)(b).

Awaiting outcome of a review

This matter will be considered in the review of the *Coroners Act 1997* arising from recommendation 6.

Recommendation 4

I recommend that s.47 of the ACT *Coroners Act 1997* be expanded to explicitly state that an inquest and inquiry are not adversarial in nature and are solely inquisitorial, with a view to establishing the truth.

Awaiting outcome of a review

This matter will be considered in the review of the *Coroners Act 1997* arising from recommendation 6.

Recommendation 5

I recommend that the ACT Government consider amending the *Coroners Act 1997* to include what were ss. 56(1)(d) and 56(2)(c) of the 1956 Coroners Act.

Awaiting outcome of a review

This matter will be considered in the review of the *Coroners Act 1997* arising from recommendation 6.

Recommendation 6

I recommend that the ACT Government commission a review of coroners' jurisdiction in order to determine whether that jurisdiction ought to be limited or expanded and, if so, to what extent.

Agreed

The government will undertake a review of the *Coroners Act 1997*. The review will include consideration of the jurisdiction of the coroner, the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the coronial process, the appointment of investigators, whether the Act should be amended to provide that a coronial is inquisitorial, and whether the Act should be amended to include sections 56(1)(d) and 56(2)(c) of the Coroners Act 1956 (repealed).

Recommendation 7

That the Emergency Services Agency be removed from the Department of Justice and Community Safety and transformed into an independent statutory authority reporting directly to the responsible Minister. I note in this regard that

Mr McLeod made a similar recommendation, and I endorse it unequivocally. Placing the agency within a government department puts unnecessary layers of bureaucracy between the agency and the responsible Minister, and the bureaucrats concerned usually have no special knowledge of or experience in emergency management, regardless of their seniority in the bureaucracy.

Not agreed

The Emergency Services Authority became part of the Department of Justice and Community Safety in order to reduce the duplication of corporate functions and to instil better financial management.

By contrast to the position of the Emergency Services Bureau in 2003, the *Emergencies Act 2004* ensures that operational decisions are made by the appropriate officers in the Emergency Services Agency, not by bureaucrats in the department. Additionally, the Minister has established the Emergency Services Governance Committee, which meets quarterly, to ensure direct consultation between the Minister and the Emergency Services Agency on matters of importance and interest.

Recommendation 8

That the Emergency Services Agency be relocated into accommodation that is purpose-built and more suited to the agency's operations than the current facility at Curtin.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented. The government has agreed to relocate the Emergency Services Agency to accommodation that is more suited to the agency's operations. The government has committed \$17.329 million (Capital) and \$2.187million (Recurrent) in the ACT Government Capital Budget 2006/2007 for this purpose.

Recommendation 9

That the Emergency Services Agency adopt a more rigorous risk management approach to incident management and prediction – with particular emphasis on the development of improved community information strategies and protocols.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since the 2003 bushfires, the Emergency Services Agency has adopted a more rigorous risk management approach to incident management and prediction. In particular the Emergency Services Agency has developed the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan and draft ACT Emergency Management Plan. Through these plans the Agency has

developed a number of strategies and protocols for improved community information, including the All Hazards Warning System and the memoranda of understanding with media agencies about providing emergency information to the community.

The Emergency Services Agency will continue to refine the risk management framework and the strategies for providing the community with information.

Recommendation 10

That before each fire season the Emergency Services Agency, in conjunction with the Bush Fire Council – and after consultation with the relevant ACT agencies, the Bureau of Meteorology, relevant NSW agencies and the community – conduct a qualitative risk analysis of the conditions and circumstances prevailing and forecast and develop strategies to ensure heightened preparedness during seasons identified as severe.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency conducts a seasonal risk analysis each year to assist in developing strategies for the upcoming fire season. The Emergency Services Agency seeks information from the Bureau of Meteorology for this purpose.

The Emergency Services Agency also seeks the advice of the Bush Fire Council in regard to the strategies. The strategies developed are used by the Emergency Services Agency and land managers in ensuring preparedness for the upcoming fire season.

Recommendation 11

That regular periodic reviews be undertaken of changes made to the operational and management arrangements for dealing with wildfires and other emergencies in the ACT, to ensure that those arrangements continue to comply with the Australian Inter-Agency Incident Management System Incident Control System.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has adopted the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) for the management of incidents in the ACT. The Emergency Services Agency has mechanisms for the review of the operating procedures for dealing with emergencies in the Territory, including wildfires. For example, following major incidents the Emergency Services Agency reviews the operational response and management, which includes consideration of the incident management system. The ACT is also represented on the National AIIMS Steering Committee that regularly reviews and updates AIIMS.

Recommendation 12

That appointments of personnel to functional positions within the incident management team be based solely on competence and experience and be made by the Chief Officer of the ACT Rural Fire Service or, in the absence of that officer, the Deputy Chief Officer of the ACT Rural Fire Service.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented in part. The government agrees that agency and multi-agency incident management team positions should be filled by competent and experienced officers as per AIIMS. However, the government does not agree that the appointment of functional positions within the bushfire incident management team should always be made by the Chief Officer of the ACT Rural Fire Service. The Chief Officer delegates responsibility for managing an incident to the Incident Controller, and this person makes appointments based on skills, competence and experience as per AIIMS.

Recommendation 13

That senior officers of the Emergency Services Agency give greater recognition to the skills, knowledge and experience of people from other agencies – particularly the land management agencies – as well as rural residents and private individuals and use these people in roles commensurate with their skills and experience.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the Emergency Services Agency has provided greater recognition of the skills, knowledge and experience of people from a range of land management agencies as well as rural residents and private individuals. The Emergency Services Agency has identified people from land management agencies, rural areas and private individuals with the necessary competence and experience to perform the functional positions within the incident management team and to assist in incidents. The Bush Fire Council has reviewed and endorsed these people. This is an ongoing process.

The government also appoints people with relevant skills, such as land management and rural fire fighters, as members of the ACT Bushfire Council.

Recommendation 14

That training of all personnel involved with emergency services be under constant review.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has introduced competency-based training for all personnel involved in responding to incidents. The level and type of training required is regularly reviewed by the Agency. The national training competencies are under constant review by national committees made up of interstate agency personnel and expert providers through national bodies such as the Australasian Fire Authorities Council.

Recommendation 15

That courses and programs be conducted to increase the level of Incident Control System training and augment the expertise of people who are likely to perform functions in an incident management team.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Since 2003, training in high-level incident management functions has been provided by the Emergency Services Agency. This training is in accordance with national competency standards and is targeted to officers who are likely to perform functions in an incident management team. It is recognised that further training, including training in specialist functions, is required and shall be undertaken.

Recommendation 16

That the Emergency Services Agency review the level of understanding among firefighting personnel of the latest information available nationally and internationally about wildfire behaviour and suppression and provide additional training if warranted.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Emergency Services Agency staff are members of a number of peak national and international bodies including Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC), BushFire Cooperative Research Centre and the International Association of Wildland Fire-fighters. Information from these peak bodies is disseminated to fire fighting personnel, including volunteers, through workshops, seminars and annual conferences provided by Fire Authorities and Land Management Agencies across Australia.

Recommendation 17

That the ACT Government allocates sufficient funds to enable full-time and volunteer firefighters to participate in relevant courses and programs.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented, with the government considering possible future funding sources. The Emergency Services Agency currently allocates funds to enable full-time and volunteer firefighters to participate in relevant courses and programs. The nature and amount of training required will be reviewed in consultation with full time and volunteer firefighters.

Recommendation 18

That the Emergency Services Agency introduce a program with land management agencies in the ACT to ensure that maps of all public and private land in the ACT are subjected to regular review and amendment as required. Maps of a scale sufficient to facilitate fire management operations should be available in printed form and maintained on an electronic database capable of modification to add relevant features during firefighting operation.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented. Since 2003, the Emergency Services Agency has developed operational maps to allow strategic and tactical operational management of bushfire operations. These maps are maintained on an electronic database that allows for the rapid production in printed form of maps for specific incidents, which can be modified as needed.

The Emergency Services Agency will formalise arrangements for regular review and amendment of these maps in conjunction with land management agencies.

Recommendation 19

That an appropriate geographic information systems capability be maintained to enable the production of fire-specific maps as the need arises and that personnel from the Emergency Services Agency and other agencies be trained in the operation of map production systems, so that maps can be modified to include fire-specific information as required.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has the capability to produce fire specific maps through its Geographic Information System.

The Emergency Services Agency will work in conjunction with other agencies to ensure this capability is maintained, which will include the training of personnel from other agencies in the production of fire specific maps.

Recommendation 20

That the Emergency Services Agency review the communications systems used by the four services (the ACT Ambulance Service, the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service and the ACT Fire Brigade), by the Australian Federal Police, by NSW emergency services and by aircraft and ensure the systems are compatible.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented. Since 2003, the Emergency Services Agency has reviewed its communication systems and has ensured that the communication systems between the services are compatible. Contracted fire fighting aircrafts are also compatible with the services.

ACT Policing Communications can monitor and transmit on the same network, although police patrols do not currently have this capability.

The Emergency Services Agency and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service have compatible communications systems. Some work is still needed and is underway in regard to improving communications with the land managers in New South Wales and protocols for New South Wales officers working in the ACT.

Recommendation 21

That version 2 of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan be completed and introduced without delay.

Agreed

The *Emergencies Act 2004* requires the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan to be reviewed at intervals of not more than five years. The government is committed to this process of reviewing the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, and is considering possible funding sources. The review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan will commence in 2007/08, with a draft by June 2008 and an anticipated completion by 2009.

Recommendation 22

That, because of the small jurisdiction of the ACT (equivalent to one fire district in NSW) the ACT Government consider all possible options for the provision of fire services to the ACT, among them

- subcontracting the provision of all fire services – or a part, such as bushfire services – to NSW firefighting services
- including in the memorandum of understanding between the ACT and NSW mutual obligation arrangements

- gradually integrating the ACT Rural Fire Service with the ACT Fire Brigade and establishing a single ACT fire service under a single management and command and control structure
 - along the lines of the Tasmania Fire Service and Victoria's Country Fire Authority.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has been implemented in part. The option of outsourcing fire services to New South Wales is not supported.

The *Emergencies Act 2004* provides for memoranda of understanding to be developed with other jurisdictions. A memorandum of understanding has been developed with New South Wales for the sharing of services and outsourcing programs such as training.

The *Emergencies Act 2004* provides for two fire services in the ACT, being the Rural Fire Service and the Fire Brigade. Since this legislation was developed, work has been undertaken to ensure better integration of the two services at the operational level.

The Emergency Services Agency will continue to examine means to improve and unify its command structure.

Recommendation 23

That priority be given to ensuring that the ACT has an adequate resource of remote area firefighting teams consisting of personnel with high levels of fitness and training in remote fire suppression.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the ACT Rural Fire Service has established and trained three dedicated remote area crews for remote fire fighting. These personnel have a high level of fitness and training.

Recommendation 24

That all firefighting agencies adopt a policy and practice that all fires in remote areas of the ACT be responded to as quickly as possible, with vigorous and sustained efforts made to suppress the fires and not leave them unattended – especially at night – unless there are compelling reasons relating to firefighter safety or lack of resources.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Government agrees that all fires in remote areas of the ACT should be responded to as quickly as possible and procedures, training and equipment have been provided since 2003 to ensure this is achieved. However, vigorous and sustained efforts may not be required in some situations, such as outside declared bushfire periods where this is consistent with broader land or fire management objectives.

The Emergency Services Agency and the incident controller are responsible for ensuring the safety of firefighters. The Emergency Services Agency has in place strategies for ensuring resources are available, including obtaining resources from interstate.

Recommendation 25

That remote area firefighting resources be deployed to a fire in a remote area as a matter of priority and in preference to the deployment of large tankers.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency deploys resources based on the operational and situational conditions presented. This may mean that deployment of a larger tanker to a remote area is preferable in some circumstances.

Recommendation 26

That helicopters be used wherever possible to facilitate the rapid deployment of remote area firefighting crews.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency National Aerial Firefighting Centre, engages appropriate helicopters during the bushfire season to enable rapid deployment of crews to remote areas as well as providing water-bombing support. The deployment of resources will be based on the operational and situational conditions presented and as appropriate to the need.

Recommendation 27

That the Emergency Services Agency investigate and implement arrangements that will provide the capacity to use fire retardant in remote areas.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented. The Emergency Services Agency will further investigate the use of fire retardant in remote areas.

Guidelines will be developed, in conjunction with land managers, on the use of fire retardant in remote areas of the ACT.

Recommendation 28

That the Emergency Services Agency give priority to ensuring it has guaranteed access to an adequate number and type of bulldozers, as well as experienced operators, during the fire season, for immediate deployment as required.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has engaged two light bulldozers and a grader, with experienced operators, for rapid deployment during the bushfire season.

The Emergency Services Agency will establish agreements with local contractors for the urgent supply of bulldozers and equipment required for fire suppression.

Recommendation 29

That land managers ensure their staff are properly trained in the effective use of large bulldozers at wildfires and that staff are available to be assigned to supervise bulldozer operations.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The land managers have provided training on the use of large bulldozers at wildfires to staff. Further training will be undertaken to ensure that additional staff are suitably qualified.

Recommendation 30

That a review be conducted of the adequacy of training and the numbers of firefighters experienced in performing effective, safe large-scale back-burning operations.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency and land managers conduct an annual review of the adequacy of training and the numbers of firefighters experienced in performing effective, safe large-scale back-burning operations.

Recommendation 31

That the Emergency Services Agency reconsider and revise the arrangements that exist between the ACT Fire Brigade and Canberra airport in relation to the provision of assistance.

Agreed in principle

The Emergency Services Agency has existing arrangements in place for the Canberra airport emergency plan and a memorandum of arrangement between the ACT Fire Brigade and Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Division of Airservices Australia. The plan and the memorandum of arrangement are both specific to assistance to be provided within the aerodrome and the structural facilities at the Canberra Airport.

The Emergency Services Agency will consult with the Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Division of Airservices Australia in regards to renegotiating the memorandum of arrangement to facilitate assistance outside of the aerodrome and the airport.

Recommendation 32

That a hazard-reduction program be introduced, involving regular and strategic burning in all areas of the ACT – including the catchment areas – with a view to having fuel-reduced areas in a pattern across the landscape, excluding only small areas of particular ecological or conservation importance.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has been implemented in part. Since 2003, a hazard reduction program has been introduced in accordance with the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan. This has resulted in regular and strategic burning in government managed land.

The review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan will include fuel management strategies to address bushfire risk. The Bushfire Operational Plans, made under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, will describe a desirable pattern of mosaic burning to achieve fire prevention and ecosystem management objectives for the ACT, including catchment areas.

The Government does not agree that all areas should be subject to hazard reduction burning, as it may not be appropriate to require hazard reduction burning on land managed for primary production.

Recommendation 33

That clarification be provided and information be made public in connection with hazard reduction proposed under the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the area designated 'Land Management Zone', which appears to cover about 70 per cent of the ACT landscape and might be excluded from fuel-reduction burning.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan clearly defines the standards of treatment required in fuel management zones, including the 'Land Management Zone' and is available to the public.

The review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan will include consideration of all aspects of the area designated as the 'Land Management Zone'. The 'Land Management Zone' currently describes areas in which the management of bushfire fuels is not the primary objective of land management and other values such as conservation of biodiversity is the principal driver of management actions. This review will involve consultation with affected land managers and the general public.

Consistent with this review Territory and Municipal Services will prepare Sub Regional Fire Management Plans to describe a desirable pattern of mosaic burning across the sub region to achieve fire prevention and ecosystem management objectives for each discrete area.

Recommendation 34

If it is not part of the proposed version 2 of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, that the plan be revised to provide for a fuel-reduction burning regime in the 'Land Management Zone' that is equivalent to that contemplated for the corridors designed as the 'Landscape Division Zone' and that the regime involve burning areas in rotation to achieve an appropriately varying fire age spectrum across the entire landscape.

Agreed in part

The review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan will include consideration of all aspects of the area designated as the 'Land Management Zone'. The 'Land Management Zone' describes areas in which the management of bushfire fuels is not the primary objective of land management and other values such as conservation of biodiversity is the principal driver of management actions. This review will involve consultation with affected land managers and the general public.

Consistent with the review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, Territory and Municipal Services will prepare Sub Regional Fire Management Plans. These Plans will describe a desirable pattern of mosaic burning across the sub region to achieve fire prevention and ecosystem management objectives for each discrete area.

The Government does not agree that the regime proposed should be to a standard equivalent to those currently required in the corridors designated as the 'Landscape Division Zone'. The 'Landscape Division Zone' are areas where fuel management is a matter of priority and require regular hazard reduction over the entire zone to meet defined standards. Such an approach would be inconsistent with the recommended pattern of mosaic burning.

Recommendation 35

That responsibility for fuel management lie with the land management agency that controls the area and that land managers be given authority to implement prescribed fuel-reduction burns within their area.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The *Emergencies Act 2004* sets out the responsibilities for undertaking fuel management, including the implementation of prescribed burning. Land Managers have the authority to implement fuel reduction burns on their area outside the declared bushfire season however a permit is required for fuel reduction burns that are undertaken during the bushfire season.

Recommendation 36

That prescribed burning operations be conducted according to agreed standard burning prescriptions.

Agreed in principle

General guidelines and templates on burning will be developed as part of the review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan. It is anticipated that these guidelines will provide flexibility to achieve a range of outcomes, such as wildlife habitat protection or restoration, catchment management for water yield or hazard reduction to maintain or reduce fuel levels.

Recommendation 37

That the Emergency Services Agency have authority over the land management agencies and other landholders in order to implement preparedness and

prevention measures – including fuel-reduction works where there are failures in compliance.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The *Emergencies Act 2004* sets out the responsibility for the Emergency Services Agency to monitor and direct preparedness and prevention measures over land management agencies and other land holders.

Recommendation 38

That a program be implemented to ensure that existing fire tracks and trails are cleared and accessible at all times and that a network of additional fire trails be established so as to allow direct fire suppression operations without undue delay in the event of a wildfire.

Agree in part

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Government supports the development and maintenance of a strategic fire trail network. However, it is not practicable to provide a network of fire trails to allow direct fire suppression operations across the entire ACT as this would require an extensive grid of trails across the Territory. Instead, in remote areas other suppression strategies are employed, such as deployment of remote area crews.

The Strategic Bushfire Management Plan has identified strategic access requirements in the ACT, in particular the requirements for new fire trails to improve response time for appliances and improve access for heavy plant into remote areas of the ACT. The review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan will provide an opportunity to consider new or revised trail needs

Bush Fire Operational Plans developed by land managers specify on ground works for fire trails maintenance, upgrade and construction.

Recommendation 39

That it be a matter of policy and practice that the relevant land management agency is responsible for the initial response to any fire or fires on the land under its care or management – within the overall operational response of the ACT Rural Fire Service.

Agreed

The policy set out in section 120 of the *Emergencies Act 2004* is that land managers must take all reasonable steps to prevent the outbreak and spread of fire on the land.

The Emergency Services Agency will develop a Commissioner's Guideline that will ensure land management agencies have formalised arrangements for co-ordination of initial response over fires on the land they manage, within the overall operational response of the Rural Fire Service. This coordination will be through an identified rostered officer of Territory and Municipal Services who may become part of the Incident Management Team if it is established.

Recommendation 40

That the policy and practice just recommended be the subject of a memorandum of understanding between the Emergency Services Agency and the Department of Territory and Municipal Services (previously the Department of Urban Services) or other relevant department or agency, so as to ensure that the land management agency on whose land a fire starts has responsibility to respond immediately to that fire in accordance with the applicable standards for weight of response. Further, the land management agency should be responsible for efforts to suppress fire until such time as it becomes clear that the suppression task is beyond the capacity of the agency, at which point the ACT Rural Fire Service should assume direct responsibility for coordinating the ongoing response.

Agreed in part

The policy set out in section 120 of the *Emergencies Act 2004* is that land managers must take all reasonable steps to prevent the outbreak and spread of fire on the land. This policy has been reflected in a memorandum of understanding between the Emergency Services Agency and the land managers in the Department of Territory and Municipal Services that the land managers are responsible for the initial response to fire on land under their care. A guideline will be developed to ensure that the policy intent is clearly met.

It is not in the interests of the community for the land managers to be responsible for suppression until the task exceeds their capacity. Instead, the Rural Fire Service retains overarching responsibility for the operational response, and supports the land managers in their initial response.

Recommendation 41

That public land management agencies ensure that their senior personnel have appropriate experience in fire management and are provided with adequate resources and suitably experienced and trained staff to effectively implement fire management programs.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Government agrees that the public land management agency requires a level of expertise in fire management. To this end the Department of Territory and Municipal Services has identified in its organisational structure a number of senior positions where fire management skills are required. The department also provides resources and training for staff in fire management.

Recommendation 42

That senior officers in the Australian Federal Police and the Emergency Services Agency maintain regular and meaningful contact during fire emergencies, to ensure full dissemination of information and thus facilitate the making of good operational decisions.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since the January 2003 bushfires, significant work has been undertaken to establish high-level forums for the coordination of emergencies within or affecting the ACT. Underpinning these forums is the ongoing development of “all hazards” emergency plans, policies, procedures, practice and operational guidance.

Arrangements are in place between the Emergency Services Agency and the Australian Federal Police for regular liaison between senior officers and for the deployment of Liaison Officers for incidents and Emergency Coordination Centres in larger scale events.

Significant events will involve senior and executive police in incident control teams. Police do and may have formal roles under policing legislation in incidents, evacuation, public safety and order and investigation.

The active draft ACT Emergency Management Plan describes roles of agencies.

Recommendation 43

That the Australian Federal Police and the Emergency Services Agency agree on a policy on community safety and evacuation during bushfires, based on the Australasian Fire Authorities Council position outlined in its paper Community Safety and Evacuation during Bushfires. Community education programs should incorporate advice on this, including the ‘stay or go’ policy.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has developed a policy on community safety and evacuation during bushfires. This policy is reflected in the publications ‘Emergencies and the National Capital - A residents guide’ and ‘Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A

Guide for the ACT'. This policy considers the Australasian Fire Authorities Council position outlined in its paper Community Safety and Evacuation during Bushfires. Further work will be undertaken on this policy and related procedures, in consultation with the ACT Policing, to ensure the safety of members of the community threatened by imminent danger.

Recommendation 44

That the Australian Federal Police and the Emergency Services Agency ensure that personnel in their respective organisations are fully briefed on the agreed policy on evacuations.

Agreed

The ACT Government agrees that training should be provided on the application of evacuation policy once it is formally agreed between the Australian Federal Police and the Emergency Services Agency.

Recommendation 45

That the Emergency Services Agency, with the support of the ACT Government, develop a single, new memorandum of understanding with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the NSW Rural Fire Service, providing for liaison and joint operations as soon as it becomes apparent to whichever jurisdiction is managing a fire that the fire will probably affect the other jurisdiction. Joint operations should not be limited to when an incident occurs on both sides of the border, as is the current arrangement.

Not agreed

Since 2003, the memoranda of understanding with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the NSW Rural Fire Service have been reviewed. There is no need to combine the two memoranda of understanding as they adequately cover the issues raised in the recommendation. The current arrangements already provide that joint operations are not limited to when an incident occurs on both sides of the border.

Recommendation 46

That the Emergency Services Agency, with the support of the ACT Government, seek to establish with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the NSW Rural Fire Service a protocol that will provide for the establishment of a joint incident management team as part of unified control arrangements based on adoption of the following principles

- the authority whose jurisdiction is more affected, or likely to be most affected, by a fire will appoint suitably qualified and experienced personnel

to the main functional roles in the incident management team – incident controller, planning officer, operations officer and logistics officer – in accordance with its own operational arrangements but in consultation with the authority of the other affected jurisdiction.

- The authority of the other affected jurisdiction will appoint suitably qualified and experienced personnel to fill the positions of deputy incident controller and deputy to each of the main functional roles in the incident management team, as the size and complexity of the incident demands and in accordance with its own operational arrangements. This should, however, be done in consultation with the authority whose jurisdiction is most affected.
- The arrangements contemplated by these provisions will be varied only with the consent of the chief officer or equivalent (or, in their absence, their deputy) of each affected authority, who will also be responsible for resolving any disagreement about which jurisdiction is most affected and about the appointment of personnel to incident management team functional roles as required by these provisions.
- The arrangements should be made using a risk-based approach.
- Facilities should be shared.
- There should be a single, integrated planning process and a single incident action plan.
- Planning, logistics and operations functions should be shared.
- There should be a coordinated process for resource acquisition and demobilisation.
- Common media and community information system and distribution strategies should be used.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented in part. Since 2003, the memoranda of understanding with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the NSW Rural Fire Service have been reviewed. The current arrangements adequately cover the issues raised in the recommendation.

Recommendation 47

That the ACT and NSW authorities conduct a comprehensive risk analysis based on the most up to date knowledge relating to fire behaviour and spread in order to establish the degree of risk to each others' jurisdiction from fires igniting in the other jurisdiction and to ensure that both jurisdictions remain fully informed and participate in risk assessments, the development of suppression strategies, and the development and dissemination of community information messages or warnings.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Both the ACT and NSW undertake comprehensive risk analysis; the general risks are discussed at meetings between the jurisdictions and information is disseminated to the NSW Bush Fire Management Committees. More specific discussions occur for incidents where there may be cross-border implications, including consideration of fire behaviour and spread and the risks to adjacent jurisdictions. Formalising these processes at a regional level would be of benefit. The Emergency Services Agency will formalise these processes with the surrounding regions of New South Wales.

Recommendation 48

That measures be taken to ensure that ACT and NSW Rural Fire Service radio communications systems are integrated, so that ACT and NSW firefighting units can communicate with each other.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. The Emergency Services Agency, including the ACT Rural Fire Service already has compatible communication systems with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. Work to improve interoperability is ongoing in regard to improving communications with the land managers in New South Wales and protocols for New South Wales officers working in the ACT.

Recommendation 49

That protocols and arrangements between the ACT and NSW require that each jurisdiction be fully involved in examining and planning for the threat posed by any fire likely to affect one or other jurisdiction and in coordinating the response to that fire.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. Both the ACT and NSW undertake comprehensive risk analysis; the general risks are discussed at meetings between the jurisdictions and information is disseminated to the NSW Bush Fire Management Committees. More specific discussions occur for incidents where there may be cross-border implications, including consideration of fire behaviour and spread and the risks to adjacent jurisdictions. Formalising these processes at a regional level would be of benefit. The Emergency Services Agency will formalise these processes with the surrounding regions of New South Wales.

Recommendation 50

That formal protocols be developed and agreed with NSW authorities, so that a concerted effort that combines the resources of both NSW and the ACT can be brought to bear in the future – without impediment caused by lines on a map that make the ACT an island within the state of NSW.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the memoranda of understanding with the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the NSW Rural Fire Service have been reviewed. The memoranda of understanding clearly identify the need and mechanisms for transfer of resources across jurisdictions when this is required by either jurisdiction in response to an incident.

Recommendation 51

That the Emergency Services Agency take measures to ensure that the community regularly receives up-to-date information on the risk of bushfires.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the Emergency Services Agency has implemented significant measures to ensure that the community receives up-to-date information on the risk of bushfires.

The Emergency Services Agency has developed a community education package through Fire Wise for educating both urban and rural communities about preparedness for bushfires and what to do if there is a bushfire. The Emergency Services Agency has also produced for the community the 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A Guide for the ACT' and 'Emergencies and the National Capital - A residents guide'.

The Emergency Services Agency has established memoranda of understanding with all major ACT Media and Canberra Connect to ensure that the ACT community receives up to date information in an emergency. Information is also provided via the ACT Government website, the Yellow Pages handy map and provision of regular public information from the Emergency Services Agency about the bushfire season and any incident occurring. The ACT Rural Fire Service volunteers and Community Fire Units also play an important role in educating and informing the community.

Recommendation 52

That the Emergency Services Agency establish annual targets for the introduction of community education programs and provide resources to conduct

regular independent assessments of the level of community preparedness engendered as a result of the programs.

Agreed

The Emergency Services Agency, through the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, receives information regarding the effectiveness of communication and strategies for bushfires awareness across Australia. This information is used by the Emergency Services Agency to refine community education programs for bushfire awareness.

Recommendation 53

That implementation of the Bushfire Wise Program continue and include a letterbox drop of the updated Bushfire Information Booklet.

Agreed in principle

This recommendation has been implemented in part. The Bushfire Information Booklet has been updated with the production of 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A Guide for the ACT'. This updated booklet was released to the Canberra community as a supplement to the Canberra Times on Sunday 10 October 2004.

The Emergency Services Agency supports the ongoing implementation of targeted community education programs about bushfires, such as the Bushfire Wise Program. The education programs that will be implemented will be those that have been identified as the most effective mechanism for informing the community about bushfires.

Recommendation 54

That consultations and negotiations occur between the Emergency Services Agency and the NSW Rural Fire Service to ensure that fire risk and safety messages to the community are coordinated. Maximum use should be made of television and radio announcements throughout the ACT and southern NSW, consistent with NSW timetables for targeted programs in conjunction with the United Firefighters Union ACT Branch and volunteer fire brigade representatives. The Emergency Services Agency should consider using ACT Fire Brigade staff and ACT Rural Fire Service volunteers to talk to groups in the community on request, thus furthering face-to-face community education in high-risk suburban areas of the ACT.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency will continue to consult with New South Wales about further developing community education programs and risk and safety messages. The Emergency

Services Agency currently works with New South Wales in the provision of joint information to the community about bushfires that may have cross-jurisdictional implications. The ACT Fire Brigade and ACT Rural Fire Service volunteers undertake community education in high-risk suburban areas of the ACT.

Recommendation 55

That the Emergency Services Agency publicise and demonstrate the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal and provide to the community adequate explanation of the application of the signal. This should occur at least annually, in conjunction with any pre-summer fire awareness initiatives.

Agreed in principle

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Government supports the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal in the ACT and has developed a policy for the use of the signal. The Emergency Services Agency conducted a Standard Emergency Warning Signal awareness campaign in 2004. Information on the Standard Emergency Warning Signal is available on the ACT Government website and is included in the publication 'Emergencies and the National Capital - A residents guide'.

Emergency Management Australia will shortly commence a National campaign to promote the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal, which will further inform the ACT community. The ACT Government applauds this initiative.

Recommendation 56

That the Emergency Services Agency staff the Media Unit within its Planning Section with professional, experienced information officers skills in dissemination of information and media management and liaison.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has employed a media professional with strong links to the local media to ensure that the ACT community receives timely and accurate advice. The Emergency Services Agency has a media service with professional and experienced information officers that provides media support during emergencies. This service operates 24 hours a day every day of the year.

Recommendation 57

That the Emergency Services Agency develop a clear policy for disseminating information to the public and the media in times of emergency and that, as required, that policy incorporate advance door-knocking of homes in the area affected, as well as regular broadcasts by local radio and television stations and regular updates on the relevant website – be that Canberra Connect or a different

ACT government website – as well as the Emergency Services Agency's website.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency has developed policy and processes to disseminate information in times of emergency. The policy has been included in public documents such as the 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A Guide for the ACT' and 'Emergencies and the National Capital - A residents guide'. The processes include regular broadcasts, updates on websites, and may include other processes such as door-knocking. The policy and processes have been tested and utilised on recent occasions and proven to be effective including after hours.

Recommendation 58

That the Emergency Services Agency conduct investigations – and liaise with emergency services agencies in other jurisdictions – in order to ascertain what technologies exist and are effective for use in disseminating warnings and associated information to the community of the ACT.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The Emergency Services Agency keeps abreast of the latest technologies and methods for disseminating warnings and information through interagency and national forums. At the recent Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management, it was agreed to undertake two national trials. The ACT Government is awaiting the outcomes of these trials.

Recommendation 59

That a system of public warnings that uses grid references shown on the maps in the Canberra telephone directory be adopted.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Government has introduced a system of public warnings that uses grid references shown on the maps in the Canberra telephone directory. The ACT Handy Map is placed on page six of the Yellow Pages and has been included since 2004 for use with public warnings.

Recommendation 60

That the Canberra Urban Development Working Group referred to in Mr Peter Dunn's letter consider the report prepared by Mr Leonard and note particularly that the community awareness information currently available to householders in connection with measures they can take to better protect their homes from bushfires does not refer to the potential of wooden fences, conifers and outbuilding to contribute greatly to fire spread, particularly in suburban areas. Also noteworthy is Mr Leonard's evidence that the linear sitting of homes on house blocks in Canberra seems to be an important factor contributing to house-to-house fire spread and that this should be avoided in future developments on the urban fringe.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been partially implemented. The issue of bushfire risk is considered at all levels in the planning hierarchy and in the development of all new residential areas in the ACT. All applicable Government committees and groups associated with land development and release are aware of the risks posed by bushfires.

The Planning and Land Authority has adopted 'Planning for Bushfire Risk Mitigation' as a planning Guideline under the Territory Plan. The Authority has also published two Firewise information brochures dealing with Home Design & Construction and Home Gardens. These Brochures identify use of fire resistant plants, fences and garden structures. In October 2006, the Authority updated its Residential Fencing Planning Guidelines to permit the use of metal fencing but only where the block is adjacent to an urban edge that has been classified at risk in terms of potential exposure.

Specific bushfire risk assessments are required to be undertaken for all new residential areas. The applicable recommendations are incorporated into subdivision design through asset protection zones, higher building standards or increased separation from the source of the risk. In relation to the linear sighting of homes, this is specifically considered during the bushfire risk assessment and any applicable recommendations are incorporated into the planning for the suburb/estate. Typically parts of new residential estates in the ACT, particularly towards the urban edge are required to be built to level 1 standards under the Building Code of Australia/AS3959.

However, the Emergency Services Agency will undertake to review the report prepared by Mr Leonard in consultation with ACT land managers and the ACT Planning and Land Authority to identify any gaps in the information currently available. As appropriate, community awareness information will be updated to reflect the findings in the report.

Recommendation 61

That the ACT Government consider taking measures to implement the provisions of Australian Standard 3959, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas, for the ACT urban area.

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented in part. New buildings and renovations exceeding 50% of the size of the premise are required to meet the building standards of AS3959 in declared bush fire high-risk zones areas in the ACT. All non-urban areas are declared bushfire prone.

Existing urban areas are not required to meet AS 3959, however as part of the planning for all new residential estates in the ACT, a bushfire risk assessment is undertaken by the land developer to identify the potential risk and any necessary mitigation measures that are required to be applied to lessen the risk. These measures are incorporated into the subdivision planning. This is a specific requirement under the Territory Plan. As part of the approval process, a bushfire risk assessment is required to be lodged as part of the development application for the subdivision and if required, bush fire related higher construction standards are imposed through the specific development conditions for the subsequent residential blocks. The resultant residential dwelling development is required to comply with any imposed condition.

Higher construction standards have been identified/implemented for areas that interface with the urban edge in the suburbs of Franklin, Harrison, Forde, Crace and Casey and the estates of Macgregor West, Dunlop 5 West and Bonython West. The rural settlements of Stromlo and Uriarra have also been identified as requiring higher construction standards.

Recommendation 62

That community education programs provide information about fire behaviour, urban design principles that contribute to a specific level of risk, and the benefits of fitting basic ember protection materials in areas at risk from bushfire.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the ACT Planning and Land Authority has developed two brochures about urban design and bushfires to assist the community. The brochures are Firewise Home Gardens and 'Firewise Home Design and Construction'. The brochures provide specific information for the community on how to protect their property from bushfire, including ember attack. These brochures are available from the ACT Planning and Land Authority, its web site and are also distributed by the ACT Fire Brigade through their Community Fire Unit programs.

The 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital A Guide for the ACT' also provides information about fire behaviour and the benefits of fitting basic ember protection materials in areas at risk from bushfire. The Emergency Service Agency continues to promote government programs for bush fire building safety through public education and Community Fire Unit programs.

Recommendation 63

That consideration be given when building to the positioning of outbuildings around residential structures such that their potential impact on the main structure is reduced.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The ACT Planning and Land Authority require development controls to apply to some outbuildings in the ACT. Where development and/or building approval is required for new developments, guidelines requiring specific bushfire risk mitigation measures, such as setback distances, are applied.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority has also prepared the 'Fire Wise Home Design and Construction' and the 'Fire wise Home Gardens' brochures. These brochures identify the potential hazards posed by decks, balconies and pergolas as well as other structures in the garden, and provide recommendations to reduce the level of bushfire risk

These brochures are available from the ACT Planning and Land Authority, its web site and are also distributed by the ACT Fire Brigade through their community programs.

Recommendation 64

That the community be made aware of the risk presented by heavy loads of garden fuels and certain types of vegetation around their houses and take active, regular measures to reduce that risk.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. Since 2003, the ACT Planning and Land Authority has developed the 'Firewise Home Gardens' brochure to provide specific information to the community to deal with the bushfire risk presented by certain types of vegetation around the home as well as the extent and location of bushfire fuels around houses.

The brochure is available from the ACT Planning and Land Authority, its web site and are also distributed by the ACT Fire Brigade through their Community Fire Unit programs.

The 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A Guide for the ACT' also provides information on reducing the risk presented by heavy loads of garden fuels and certain types of vegetation around the house.

Recommendation 65

That the ACT Government and ActewAGL jointly develop and implement protocols that will create a procedure whereby each of the water and sewerage, electricity and gas distribution networks, or parts thereof, can safely and promptly be manipulated, controlled, shut off, isolated or disconnected under emergency conditions.

Agreed

This recommendation has been partially implemented. The ACT Government and ActewAGL are currently in the process of developing these protocols.

Recommendation 66

That community education programs include unambiguous information that at times of unusually high water demand there might be a drop in or loss of water pressure and it might be appropriate for residents who intend to remain and fight a fire to have auxiliary water pumps or booster pumps.

Agreed

This recommendation has already been implemented. The publication 'Bushfires and the Bush Capital - A Guide for the ACT' advises that at times of unusually high water demand there might be a drop in or loss of water pressure and that it may be appropriate for residents who intend to remain and fight a fire to have water pumps and auxiliary water supply. This information will continue to be disseminated in community education programs about bushfires.

Recommendation 67

I recommend that, as appropriate, the ACT cooperate with the Commonwealth in the implementation of the committee's recommendations (The 2003 Inquiry by the House of Representatives Select Committee on the Recent Australian Bushfires) and, in particular, give careful consideration to adoption of the following recommendations:

- recommendation 7-construction and maintenance of and signage for fire trail networks
- recommendation 12-development of prescribed burning guides for national parks and state forests

- recommendation 22 – participation in a review of occupational health and safety legislation as it affects the proper and effective functioning of bushfire services
- recommendation 29 – a commitment to rapid initial attack on wildfires
- recommendation 35 – compatibility of communications equipment
- recommendation 44 – exemption of volunteer firefighters from paying firefighting levies
- recommendation 48 – regular risk assessments of controlled land to ensure that bushfire-prone areas are accurately identified and suitably managed.
- Recommendation 51 – creation of a bushfire awareness and preparedness day, similar to Clean Up Australia Day
- recommendation 52 – adoption of the Australian Fire Authorities Council's suggested evacuation protocol

Agreed in part

This recommendation has already been implemented in part. The ACT Government has given consideration to adoption of the recommendations in A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires. In relation to the specific recommendations, the ACT Government has funded fire trail signage and this has been partially implemented to date, a Bush fire Clean up Day has been held, the evacuation policy by the Australian Fire Authorities Council has been adopted.

The Emergency Services Agency and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service have compatible communications systems. Some work is still needed in regard to improving communications with the land managers in New South Wales and protocols for New South Wales officers working in the ACT. In regard to recommendation 29, the Emergency Services Agency deploys resources based on the operational and situational conditions presented. General guidelines and templates on burning will be developed as part of the review of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan.

In regard to recommendation 48 of the A Nation Charred: Inquiry into the Recent Australian Bushfires the response is included in the response to recommendation 61 above.

In regard to recommendation 22, issues regarding the safety of volunteers are considered by the Emergency Services Agency and volunteers have access to workers compensation.

The issue in recommendation 44, is under national consideration the outcome of which will be reviewed by Government when known.

Recommendation 68

That the views and concerns expressed by the ACT Sustainable Rural Lands Group be taken into account when implementing the recommendations of this report.

Agreed

The Emergency Services Agency will consider the views and concerns of the ACT Sustainable Rural Lands Group expressed in The Canberra Firestorm - Inquests and Inquiry into four deaths and four fires between 8 and 18 January 2003 in implementing the agreed recommendations.

Recommendation 69 and Recommendation 70

That, if he is willing to participate, Mr John Lowe be made a member of the implementation taskforce to which I refer in recommendation 70.

and

That a taskforce be established to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

Not agreed

The ACT Government does not support the establishment of a new taskforce to give effect to the recommendations. The ACT Government will approach the ACT Bushfire Council, which already has the function of advising the Minister about matters relating to bushfires and will ask the Council to monitor and review the implementation of the agreed recommendations and report to the Minister on implementation.

Recommendation 71

That the taskforce review the extent to which the recommendations in the McLeod report have been implemented in order to ensure implementation of those not yet implemented.

Not agreed

The ACT Government does not support the establishment of a new taskforce to review the implementation of the McLeod Report. The ACT Government will approach the ACT Bushfire Council in regard to reviewing the extent to which the McLeod Report has been implemented.

Recommendation 72

That the taskforce review the recommendations of the seven reviews of the Emergency Services Bureau carried out before the McLeod inquiry to ensure implementation of any of those recommendations that remain relevant but have not been implemented.

Not agreed

The ACT Government does not support the establishment of a new taskforce to review the seven reviews carried out on the Emergency Services Bureau prior to the McLeod Report. The ACT Government will approach the ACT Bushfire Council in regard to considering the implementation of any relevant recommendations of the previous reviews.

Recommendation 73

If they are willing and available to participate, that the taskforce's membership include Mr Phil Cheney, Mr Tony Bartlett, Mr Val Jeffrey and Mr John Lowe.

Not agreed

The ACT Government does not support the establishment of a new taskforce to review the implementation of the McLeod Report. The ACT Government will approach the ACT Bushfire Council to undertake review and reporting on the issues the subject of these recommendations. The Bushfire Council may, if it chooses, approach these individuals to assist in this work.