

**Review of the Auditor-General's
Report to Parliament No. 10: 2014-15**

***Bushfire prevention and
preparedness***

**Report No. 19, 55th Parliament
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
December 2015**

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

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Abbreviations

BSO	Bushfire Safety Officers
Committee	Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
Department	Department
FMGs	Fire Management Groups
IDC	Interdepartmental Committee
Malone Review	Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013
NGOs	Non-government organisations and private organisations
PACSR	Police and Community Safety Review 2013
PPRR	Prevention, preparedness, response and recovery
PSBA	Public Safety Business Agency
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QPS	Queensland Police Service
Report	Review of the Auditor-General's Report to Parliament 10: 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness
RFS	Rural Fire Service
SDMP	State Disaster Management Plan
TOM	Total Operation Mapping: a tool QFES uses to map bushfire hazards
VBRC	Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission 2009

Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's examination of the Auditor-General's report, *Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, pursuant to standing order 194B of the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.

The committee's task was to consider the Auditor-General's findings in relation to Queensland Fire and Emergency Service's (QFES) management of bushfire prevention and preparedness.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the committee's secretariat and the staff from the Auditor-General's office, and the staff from QFES, the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) and the Inspector-General Emergency Management (IGEM) for their assistance with the committee's consideration of the Auditor-General's report.

I commend this report to the House.

Mark Furner MP
Chair

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

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The committee recommends the House note this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Role of the Committee

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (Committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 27 March 2015 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹

The Committee's primary areas of responsibility include:

- Justice and Attorney-General;
- Police Service
- Fire and Emergency Services
- Training and Skills.

Under section 92 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, a portfolio committee is to consider legislation, public works and public accounts matters pertaining to its areas of responsibility, and to deal with any matters referred to it by the Legislative Assembly.

Under Standing Order 194B, the Committee of the Legislative Assembly (CLA) is to refer reports of the Auditor-General tabled in the Assembly to the relevant portfolio committee for consideration.

1.2 Referral

Report No. 10: 2014-15 of the Queensland Audit Office: *Bushfire prevention and preparedness* (the Report) was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 16 December 2014 and in accordance with Standing Order 194B, was referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee for consideration.

1.3 Role of the Auditor-General

The role of the Auditor-General is to provide Parliament with independent assurance of public sector accountability and performance. This is achieved through reporting to Parliament on the results of its financial and performance audits.

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, section 88 and Standing Order 94.

2. Examination

2.1 Background

The objective of the audit was to determine if Queensland is better able to prevent and prepare for bushfires following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013.² The cost of the audit was \$366 000.

The 2014 bushfire forecast predicted higher than normal risk of bushfires for much of south east Queensland which raised the need for Queensland to anticipate and recognise the risk and to prepare accordingly and effectively.³ The Report says:

To prepare successfully for bushfires, Queensland must have an effective bushfire management system which addresses prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. (PPRR). This system involves strategic processes to manage risk, including hazard identification, risk assessment and mitigation planning – this produces prepared and resilient households, communities and emergency services.

Due to its technical capabilities and legislated authority, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) is the primary preparation and response agency for bushfires in Queensland. Managing Queensland's bushfire risk is a 'shared responsibility' that extends beyond government agencies to include individual landowners, communities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and private organisations.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC), the Malone Review into Rural Fire Services in Queensland 2013 (Malone Review) and the Police and Community Safety Review 2013 (PACSR) identified improvements that could strengthen Queensland's bushfire preparedness. The reviews made a total of 287 recommendations, of which 168 related to bushfire safety, QFES and its organisational capability.⁴

The audit focused on recommendations relevant to Queensland's bushfire preparedness, expecting that QFES and the Public Safety Business Agency (PSBA) had implemented relevant recommendations for the three reviews.⁵

The Report concludes that QFES needs to do more to respond effectively to bushfires; needs to coordinate activities and adopt preventative actions rather than focus primarily on responding to fires; and does not balance preparation and response appropriately.⁶ The Report states:

QFES has demonstrated a slow cultural shift towards taking greater responsibility over mitigating activities. The absence of a central authority, coordinating and overseeing mitigation activities statewide, hampers the ability of QFES to respond to a bushfire event effectively and efficiently. This diminishes QFES's awareness of Queensland's bushfire preparedness and ultimately impairs the agency's ability to fulfill its role effectively under the State Disaster Management Plan.

Communities remain exposed to higher levels of risk than they need to be. Responsible agencies have not implemented all recommendations as or when they were intended to

² Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 1.

⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 1.

⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 1.

*be, nor are they using the bushfire management system to its full potential. Additionally, QFES has limited awareness of communities' preparedness for bushfires.*⁷

2.2 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

The *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* establishes responsibility to prepare for and respond to bushfire with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES); and states that QFES is required to provide an advisory service and undertake other measures to promote fire prevention and fire control.⁸

QFES consists of three divisions:

- Operations and Emergency Management
- Emergency Services Volunteers
- Capability and Performance.

QFES operations are divided into seven regions: South Eastern, Brisbane, North Coast, South Western, Central, Northern and Far Northern.

QFES has approximately 35,000 rural fire service volunteers, 6,000 state emergency service volunteers and more than 4,000 paid firefighters (permanent and auxiliary). It delivers services including firefighting, road crash and other technical rescues, emergency management, community education, chemical and hazardous material management, building safety services and other fire and emergency services.⁹

2.3 The Malone Review

In 2013 the previous Queensland Government ordered a review of Rural Fire Services in Queensland. The review team was led by Mr Ted Malone MP, then the member for Mirani. The purpose of the Malone Review was to investigate and provide options on the functions, structure, leadership and funding of Queensland's Rural Fire Service (RFS). The Malone Review, tabled on 22 April 2013, made a total of 91 recommendations.¹⁰

2.4 The Police and Community Safety Review

The Police and Community Safety Review (PACSR) was initiated by the former Minister for Police and Community Safety in late 2012 and commenced in early 2013. It focused on factors that prevent efficiency, effectiveness and interoperability across the police and community safety portfolios.

The PACSR included an assessment of the Malone Review recommendations, and made 129 recommendations.¹¹ The PACSR report was released on 10 September 2013.

The then government accepted all 129 recommendations. The PACSR provides that the QFES is responsible for implementing 32 of those recommendations, and that the recommendations pertaining to QFES predominantly focus on the agency's structure, culture, services and employment arrangements.¹²

⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 1.

⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 7.

⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 7.

¹⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

¹¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

¹² Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

2.5 Machinery of government changes

The former Department of Community Safety was comprised of a number of discrete operational agencies – the Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Corrective Services, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (which incorporated the Rural Fire Service) and Emergency Management Queensland (which incorporates the State Emergency Service).

On 6 May 2014 the Public Safety Business Agency was established as a result of the PACSR Review to provide executive, corporate and business services to QFES, QPS and the Office of the Inspector-General, Emergency Management.^{13,14}

The Report states:

The Reviews made a total of 287 recommendations: 168 of which related to bushfire safety, QFES and its organisational capacity.

Successful implementation of recommendations required both QFES and the PSBA to have in place, or establish, effective and efficient governance arrangements. This would ensure recommendations were adequately assessed for their applicability and implementation was carefully planned, monitored and evaluated to ensure implemented solutions addressed the underlying issues.

We examined whether Queensland's response to the three reviews was adequate and the implementation status of recommendations.

We expected to find agencies had:

- *assessed recommendations for their applicability to Queensland*
- *implemented relevant recommendation in a timely manner*
- *evaluated the solutions implemented for effectiveness.*¹⁵

2.6 Key findings of the Auditor-General Report

The Report states:

As of October 2014, 114 (68 per cent) of 168 recommendations were reported as implemented and 54 (32 per cent) of recommendations were in progress.

*Of the 54 recommendations in progress, 44 (83 per cent) are from the more recent Malone Review and PACSR. These relate to structural changes to QFES and will take time to implement.*¹⁶

Mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk

The Report found that while QFES has legislative responsibility, it has limited visibility and oversight of the state's bushfire risks. The Report also found:

- QFES's bushfire response is response focused
- QFES's plans contain minimal information about bushfire prevention and preparedness
- Mitigation plans are less useful in showing preparation and response are in balance
- Mitigating bushfire risk requires identifying bushfire hazards; assessing their likelihood of

¹³ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 8.

¹⁴ Queensland Corrective Services became part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

¹⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 12.

¹⁶ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, pp 12-13.

eventuating and their potential to cause harm

- QFES manages hazard identification and mitigation regionally; yet the seven QFES regions are not recording their vegetation fire hazard in detail
- There is no central repository for regions to record any high risk, bushfire-prone areas identified during regular inspections
- QFES chairs fire management groups (FMGs) which bring major land managers and other stakeholders together to help manage Queensland's fuel loads
- While QFES collates hazard reduction burns conducted on a regional basis, FMG members do not collect each other's fire management plan and do not capture each agency's planned hazard reduction burns
- FMG members do not report on the effectiveness of their burns
- QFES is unaware if required hazard reduction burns occurred, whether the burns were effective, or if Queensland's fuel loads are being managed effectively.¹⁷

Preparing Queensland communities for the threat of bushfires

The Report found that Queensland supported, but did not implement, a specific VBRC recommendation that individual communities at risk of bushfire develop local plans, and considered this was a significant omission by the interdepartmental committee tasked with overseeing Queensland's response to the VBRC recommendations.

The Report also found that while Queensland has revised its bushfire safety policy and QFES has developed bushfire education materials, QFES does not coordinate its educational activities well, nor does it direct them to communities most at risk; stating:

The inability of QFES to target education and rising community awareness increases the risk of adverse safety outcomes and can hamper emergency responders in fulfilling their role effectively.¹⁸

2.7 Report recommendations

The Report recommends that QFES:

1. strengthens its oversight role as lead agency for mitigating Queensland's bushfire risk to acceptable levels by:
 - coordinating land managers' efforts to assess and mitigate bushfire risk
 - formalising the role of fire management groups to manage Queensland's fuel loads, including reporting planned and conducted hazard reduction burns and the effectiveness of hazard reduction burns
 - amending its bushfire mitigation planning to address prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and to manage Queensland's residual bushfire risk
 - developing and implementing a coordinated strategy to address arson, deterring would-be offenders and rehabilitating convicted offenders
 - working with local councils to develop and communicate local bushfire plans for communities located in high risk, bushfire-prone areas.

¹⁷ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 2.

¹⁸ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 2.

2. improves engagement with communities to prepare for and respond to bushfire by:
 - increasing focus on monitoring the effects of educational materials it develops
 - reviewing and amending its bushfire warnings and alert protocols to provide clear and consistent messages to residents about the action to be taken before and during a bushfire.¹⁹

2.8 Interdepartmental Committee

The Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) was established in March 2010 to consider the VBRC report, and oversee and implement Queensland's response. The Assistant Director-General of the former Department of Community Safety chaired the IDC, with membership from 12 state government departments.

In December 2010, the Queensland Government had published its response to the VBRC findings and recommendations. Of the 67 recommendations, the Queensland Government considered 22 recommendations to be 'not applicable' or 'not supported'. The Report states:

While the IDC established governance processes to guide and oversee the implementation of supported recommendations, it failed to establish implementation time frames to monitor the implementation status accurately or to ensure feedback was effectively incorporated.

The IDC stopped meeting in December 2011 and did not provide a final report to government. PSBA was unable to explain the cessation of the IDC; it was not formally dissolved and did not plan how the outstanding recommendations would be implemented. The working document used to track the implementation progress was updated to August 2012 and recorded 27 VBCR recommendations as yet to be implemented. PSBA started reviewing the implementation status of these recommendations after this audit commenced.

The IDC left incomplete acquittal documentation which made it difficult for PSBA to ascertain if recommendations supported by the government were implemented. Electricity distributors analysed eight recommendations related to electricity-caused fires when the government required further analysis in response to the VBRC report; however, the IDC did not review the work nor was it presented to government to make an informed decision.

The IDC terms of reference did not include an implementation review function; neither the PSBA nor QFES has evaluated any of the implanted solutions to ensure they address the underlying concern effectively.²⁰

The Report noted that implementation of all Malone Review and PACSR recommendations was scheduled to be complete by 30 June 2015.²¹

No external body has reviewed the implementation solutions to confirm they address underlying concerns, however, QFES has drafted an evaluation strategy to review the effectiveness of implemented recommendations. At the time of the Report (December 2014), no timelines had been set to commence or finalise the evaluation.²²

¹⁹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 3.

²⁰ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, pp 13 – 14.

²¹ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 14.

²² Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, p 14.

At the public hearing, the QFES responded to a question about the implementation of recommendations from a number of reports and inquiries as follows:²³

Obviously, from reviews there have been many recommendations and a lot of those recommendations from time to time are inconsistent with each other but they follow very quickly from each other....what has struck me is that what we need to do is to bring together the themes from each of these reports to get a consistent approach and an accepted approach, particularly with our rural fire brigades on each and every one of those recommendations and, rather than rely on the recommendation itself, come up with something that looks at the issue that was the subject of the recommendation and get acceptance of what that means.

2.9 Response to the Auditor-General Report

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, a copy of the Report was provided to QFES and the PSBA for comment. In a joint response, the then Commissioner QFES, and the Chief Executive Officer, PSBA provided a response. Their response outlined the following key improvements:

- Establishment of Area Fire Management Groups (AFMGs) across Queensland, responsible for developing Area Fire Management Plans (AFMPs) which include prevention, preparedness, response and recovery strategies
- Placement of Bushfire Safety Officers (BSO) who coordinate a network of approximately 300 Volunteer Community Educators
- Enhanced mapping capabilities, including more accurate vegetation mapping.²⁴

The response also outlines the next phase of improvements which includes developing the Office of Bushfire Mitigation, and further enhancing mapping capabilities. QFES will also ensure:

- relevant information is provided to Local Disaster Management Groups
- existing bushfire warnings and alerts will be examined to ensure the consistency and comprehensiveness of messages
- an evaluation strategy will be developed to ensure specific bushfire education is effective
- continue to contribute to national work on the fire danger rating system.²⁵

2.10 IGEM report – state agency integration at the local and district level.

In August 2015 the Minister tabled in Parliament four reports by the Inspector-General Emergency Management, including a Review of local governments' emergency warning capability; and Review of state agency integration at a local and district level. While these deal with emergency management rather than preparation and planning, there are learnings from those reviews that inform the issues raised by the Auditor-General's report.

In respect of state agency integration for disaster management at the local and district level, the Inspector-General found that there were a number of impediments:²⁶

²³ Record of Proceedings (Handard), 2 December 2015, pp 6-7.

²⁴ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, pp 32-33.

²⁵ Queensland Audit Office, *Report to Parliament No. 10 2014-15, Bushfire prevention and preparedness*, pp 33-34.

²⁶ Inspector-General Emergency Management, report 2: 2014-15. Review of state agency integration at a local and district level, p 8.

- *Integrated, risk-based planning is not evident across the disaster management sector, resulting in too great a reliance on relationships and the experience of some disaster management practitioners.*
- *The Queensland State Disaster Management Plan allocates roles and responsibilities for state agencies but does not elaborate on those responsibilities and how they are to be delivered.*
- *Hazard-specific structures and plans are not well assimilated into the broader arrangements, which limits the integration of state agencies at the district and local level.*

In respect of fire, the Inspector-General notes:

We observed a general mismatch between expectations of local government and the capabilities of an agency to support that local government. This was particularly the case for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Area Coordinators. Most local government representatives sought the same level of support as provided by the former Emergency Management Queensland Area Director role. We note the linkages this role provided between local and district groups. Local government representatives indicated it was critical to the functioning of their local group, and facilitated a mutual understanding of capability and capacity, especially during response activities. District representatives viewed the area coordinator position as pivotal to achieving the QFES functions in the State Plan, particularly during response activities.²⁷

A state planning model that directs integrated risk-based planning at all levels of the arrangements will guide and clarify roles and responsibilities, provide for better assessment of capacity and capability and improve integration.

We also observed that information integration is reduced as a result of the different information management systems used by all entities. Viable solutions that promote information sharing between groups and state agencies should be a priority to improve integration.

The Inspector-General suggested lead and support agencies and timeframes for implementation of the IGEM recommendations. Two recommendations particularly pertinent to the issues under consideration in this report are:

- *That Queensland's disaster management arrangements are reviewed to enhance integration. Specifically:*
 - *to address the disparity between functions and structure of local government and disaster groups*
 - *to integrate hazard specific agency planning at all levels of the arrangements*

(This may include legislative, policy and procedural considerations).

- *Responsibilities of functional lead agencies and hazard-specific primary agencies are clearly articulated in state level doctrine, including the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan.²⁸*

²⁷ Inspector-General Emergency Management, report 2: 2014-15. Review of state agency integration at a local and district level, p 23.

²⁸ Inspector-General Emergency Management, report 2: 2014-15. Review of state agency integration at a local and district level, p 10.

The Inspector-General review of local governments' emergency warning capability made similar findings about the disconnect between statewide approaches, arrangements and disaster management doctrine, and references independent approaches to disaster management taken by different stakeholders.²⁹

At the committee's public hearing on 2 December, IGEM noted that there is a degree of overlap in the timings between its report and the IGEM reports:

*The QAO report was finalised in about October 2014 and tabled at the end of 2014. This is about the same time as IGEM started gathering information for [its] reports.*³⁰

The IGEM also noted that there were some common themes identified by both the QAO and IGEM reports:

*...there is a tendency for disaster management entities to focus on response; the decentralised disaster management arrangements we have in Queensland require greater state level policy support and coordination; there are opportunities to improve value for money community outcomes through integrated risk based planning at all levels; community education engagement too should be strengthened so that communities better understand local risks.*³¹

2.11 Committee consideration

In considering the Report, the committee received a private briefing from the Auditor-General. After considering the information provided by the Auditor-General, the committee sought an update from the PSBA and QFES regarding the progress of these undertakings, and the implementation of Report recommendations (see appendix 1). It also considered IGEM reports 1 and 2. On 2 December 2015, the committee held a public hearing with witnesses, including the QFES, PSBA and IGEM and on 11 December, the QFES provided additional information responding to questions taken on notice at the hearing.

A summary of information provided to the committee during its review of the Report follows:

Management and coordination of risk mitigation activities

- Area Fire Management Groups (AFMGs) have now been established and are fully operational in all RFSQ areas across Queensland, with most covering the boundaries of local government areas. Bushfire safety officers now have responsibility in certain areas for the management and support of a volunteer community education network at that regional level. At the public hearing the QFES stated that this will: *...provide an integral link with regional interdepartmental committees and area fire management groups.*³²
- The management of fuel loads is the responsibility of landowners. QFES has improved the reporting and evaluation of hazard reductions to ensure that data is recorded on the time and location of mitigation burns; and that other bushfire mitigation measures undertaken such as slashing or creating fire breaks, and community education programs, are recorded.
- A new reporting mechanism has been established for AFMGs to record planned hazard reduction and other bushfire mitigation activities as part of the Area Fire Management Plan (AFMP) process.

²⁹ Inspector-General Emergency Management, report 1: 2014-15. Review of local governments' emergency warning capability, pp 6-7.

³⁰ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 3.

³¹ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 4.

³² Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 5.

- A mapping tool will be provided to all AFMGs for use in planning for the 2016 bushfire season, to assist them to allocate resources and perform risk reduction activities. At the committee's public hearing the QFES stated:

The ready portal mapping system, or the bushfire prone mapping system, is fully developed and it is close to full implementation. At the moment, it is focusing on the south-east corner of Queensland until we get the IT. We are also identifying that it could be linked up to the SES's TAMS program....But from the trials and where it is being trialled around Cool Burn it is very effective and very good.³³

- QFES has now established a central entity, the Office of Bushfire Mitigation, which will be responsible for strategic bushfire mitigation, fire prevention and planning as well as coordinating activities across the state with oversight for area fire management groups, for bushfire safety officers and for fire wardens. At the public hearing, the QFES stated:

The creation of the Office of Bushfire Mitigation will improve community awareness and knowledge and they will be tasked to do that in relation to bushfire safety and prevention by providing a consistent, coordinated and proactive approach to bushfire mitigation across all relevant government agencies and community stakeholders.³⁴

- The QFES stated that the new office would work closely with the State Interdepartmental Committee (SIDC) on Bushfires and regional IDCs on Bushfires. There are also plans to appoint an additional three Bushfire Safety Officer positions by the end of 2015. At the public hearing, the QFES advised it had appointed bushfire safety officers in the south coast and Burnett areas.³⁵
- QFES is working with the QPS on improving coordination of bushfire arson matters and their appropriate referral to the QPS; and with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in relation to the adequacy of legislation that pertains to arson.
- The SIDC on Bushfires now has responsibility for providing direction on effective strategies for the prevention of bushfire arson.

Contribution to research on bushfires

- QFES provides funding to the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre over an eight-year period. In 2014-15 the contribution was \$206,400. QFES is represented on the Research Centre's advisory forum and adoption working group, and is closely involved with individual research projects. Negotiations are underway to have more of the Centre's researched conducted in Queensland.

Local Disaster Management Groups

- AFMGs will be actively involved in supporting Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) in terms of providing relevant information and bushfire risk support.
- The intent is that AFMGs become a sub-plan of Local Disaster Management Plans (LDMPs), identifying community bushfire risks and hazards and linking to the state's disaster management structure. AFMGs have been tasked with working with local disaster management groups to ensure that all relevant information on bushfire risk is provided to them to enable local councils and other local authorities to better inform and prepare their communities.³⁶

³³ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 7.

³⁴ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 5.

³⁵ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 5.

³⁶ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 6.

Evaluation of education material

- Written feedback is now collected from participants in community training programs, which are largely delivered by volunteers. Alternatives, such as smartphone applications are being considered to capture feedback more effectively and efficiently.
- A survey is being disseminated to those who download QFES school-based programs (for example on bushfire education) and who indicate a willingness to be contacted for feedback. Overall feedback indicates satisfaction but there is some scope for improvement which will feed into the development of new materials.
- The QAO report indicated that only one school had downloaded the Queensland Bushfire Education program at that time. The QFES has more recently advised the committee that since then there have been a total of 119 downloads of these resources, 65 per cent of these were downloaded by schools.³⁷
- The QFES is currently evaluating the effectiveness of the 2015 'Know your Bushfire Warnings, Prepare. Act. Survive.' campaign. Preliminary findings indicate that the campaign's radio advertising was successful in raising awareness of the three levels of bushfire warnings. The full evaluation will be completed within one month and provided to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.³⁸

Bushfire warnings and alerts / National fire danger rating system

- A National Review of Warnings and Information commenced in mid-2015. A dedicated multi-hazard national working group will be formed to address the findings and implement recommendations. QFES will be part of this national working group. At the public hearing, it was stated:

...we have continued to work very closely with the people responsible nationally for the alert system. As late as yesterday evening we had representatives at a national meeting in Sydney where they were working on the approach to be taken to get consistency and the appropriate messaging for those alerts. We have the capability centrally now to provide alert capability to any local authority, any fire management group, or any rural fire brigade that needs to use that alert system.³⁹

- QFES is represented on and actively contributes to the national bodies completing work on the fire danger rating system.

Public information officers

- An additional 30 Public Information Officers have been trained by the QFES since 1 July 2014. The training covers roles and responsibilities, and how public information can be disseminated, threat levels, the warning matrix, advice notices and how to request messages, warnings and community information.

Overall evaluation strategy

- A draft evaluation strategy is in development to examine the effectiveness of all of the implemented recommendations:
- The draft strategy includes a risk-based approach and outlines potential measurement criteria to gauge the success of the implemented actions / solutions. It also outlines the potential use of a number of different evaluation and analytical techniques to assist in measuring

³⁷ QFES, 11 December 2015, Response to questions taken on notice, p 2.

³⁸ QFES, 11 December 2015, Response to questions taken on notice, p 2.

³⁹ Record of Proceedings (Hansard), 2 December 2015, p 6.

effectiveness, such as quantitative data collection and analysis, interviews with relevant staff and officers, stakeholder consultation and commentary, and evaluation against established best-practice.⁴⁰

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends the House note this report.

⁴⁰ PSBA/QFES Response, June 2015, p 4.