

# Rockhampton Regional Council Local Disaster Management Group **Bushfire Management Strategy (2021-2025)**



# Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Strategy (2021-2025)

<b>1</b>	<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Bushfire Management Governance</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Summary of Recommendations	6
<b>4</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Drivers for Continuous Improvement – Bushfire Management in the Future</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Pathways</b>	<b>9</b>
6.1	Pathway Action 1 (Prevention): Land Use Planning	9
6.1.1	Recommendation S1	9
6.1.2	Recommendation S2	9
6.1.3	Current Situation	9
6.1.4	Supporting Finding	11
6.1.5	Future Risks and Opportunities	11
6.2	Pathway Action 2 (Prevention): Development Control (including Building Constructions and Standards)	11
6.2.1	Recommendation S3	11
6.2.2	Recommendation S4	11
6.2.3	Recommendation S5	11
6.2.4	Current Situation	12
6.2.5	Supporting Findings	12
6.2.6	Future Risks and Opportunities	12
6.3	Pathway Action 3 (Prevention): Bushfire Risk-Based Planning – Shared Operational Intelligence/Collaboration	13
6.3.1	Recommendation S6	13
6.3.2	Recommendation S7	13
6.3.3	Recommendation S8	13
	<b>Responsible: QFES Rockhampton Fire Management Group</b>	<b>Target Date: 30th June 2021.</b>
	13	
6.3.4	Current Situation	13
6.3.5	Supporting Findings	14
6.3.6	Future Risks and Opportunities	14
6.4	Pathway Action 4 (Prevention): Risk Based Planning - Council Land Management	15
6.4.1	Recommendation S9	15
6.4.2	Current Situation	15
6.4.3	Recent Findings	16
6.4.4	Future Risks and Opportunities	16
6.5	Pathway Action 5 (Preparedness): Risk Based Planning - Seasonal Fire Risk	17
6.5.1	Recommendation S10	17
6.5.2	Recommendation S11	17
6.5.3	Current Situation	17
6.5.4	Future Risks and Opportunities	18
6.6	Pathway Action 6 (Preparedness): Risk Based Planning - Community Preparedness	18
6.6.1	Recommendation S12	19
6.6.2	Recommendation S13	19
6.6.3	Current Situation	19
6.6.4	Supporting Findings	20
6.6.5	Future Risks and Opportunities	20
6.7	Pathway Action 7 (Response): Risk Based Planning - Bushfire Community Impact	20
6.7.1	Recommendation S14	21
6.7.2	Recommendation S15	21
6.7.3	Recommendation S16	21
6.7.4	Current Situation	21

6.7.5	Supporting Findings	21
6.7.6	Future Risks and Opportunities	22
<b>6.8</b>	<b>Pathway Action 8 (Response): Bushfire Management Accountability</b>	<b>23</b>
6.8.1	Recommendation S17	23
6.8.2	Recommendation S18	23
6.8.3	Recommendation S19	23
6.8.4	Current Situation	23
6.8.5	Future Risks and Opportunities	24
<b>6.9</b>	<b>Pathway Action 9 (Recovery): Resilience-Focused Bushfire Recovery</b>	<b>25</b>
6.9.1	Recommendation S20	25
6.9.2	Current Situation	26
6.9.3	Relevant Findings	26
6.9.4	Future Risks and Opportunities	26
<b>7</b>	<b>Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Annex A – References</b>	<b>28</b>

This document was endorsed by the Rockhampton LDMG on Friday 19th February 2020.

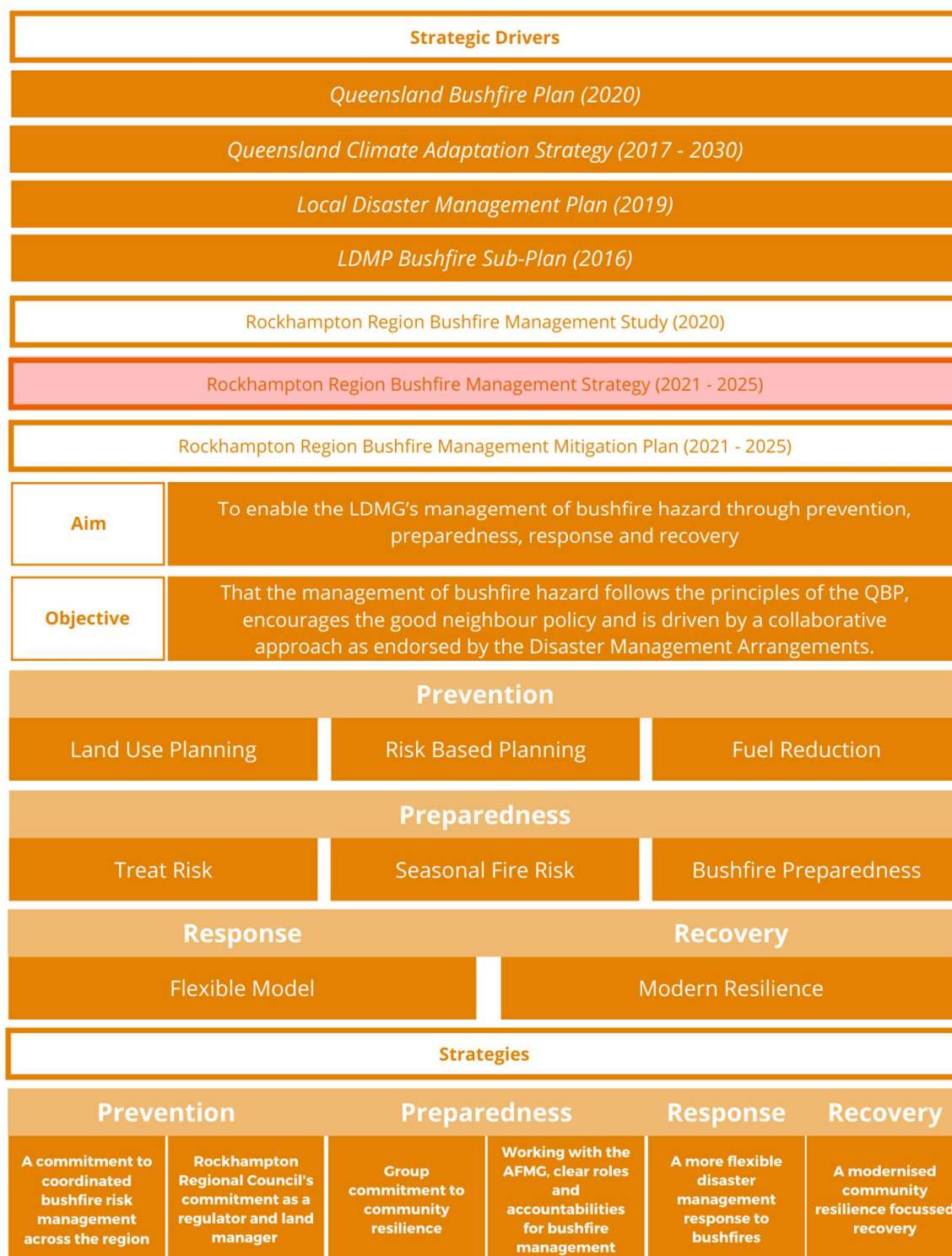
## List of Acronyms

AFAC	Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council
AFMG	Area Fire Management Group
BAL	Bushfire Alert Level (QFES)
BaU	Business as Usual
BEP-MA	Bushfire Evacuation Plan – Mount Archer
BEP-MM	Bushfire Evacuation Plan – Mount Morgan
BRMP	Bushfire Risk Management Plan (prepared by the AFMG)
BMP	Bushfire Management Plan (for Development Applications)
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
BPWG	Bushfire Planning Working Group
DCHDE	Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
DDMG	District Disaster Management Group
DIDRR	Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
DMU	Disaster Management Unit
DoR	Department of Resources
FDI	Fire Danger Index
FDR	Fire Danger Rating
FFDI	Forest Fire Danger Index
GFDI	Grass Fire Danger Index
ICC	Incident Control Centre
IMT	Incident Management Team
IGEM	Inspector General, Emergency Management
LGA	Local Government Area
LDC	Local Disaster Coordinator
LDCC	Local Disaster Coordination Centre
LDMG	Local Disaster Management Group
LDMP	Local Disaster Management Plan
LSFMG	Locality Specific Fire Management Group
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
QBP	Queensland Bushfire Plan
QDMA	Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements
QSDMP	Queensland State Disaster Management Plan
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
QPWS&P	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships
QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
ROC	Regional Operations Centre (QFES)
RRC	Rockhampton Regional Council
SPP	State Planning Policy
WAL	Wildfire Alert Level (QFES - previous term, which is replaced by BAL)



# 1 Bushfire Management Governance

The Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Strategy (2021-2025) sits within the Rockhampton Region Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) governance structure as outlined below.



Rockhampton Region LDMG Bushfire Management Governance Structure

## 2 Executive Summary

Since the early 2000s, the prevalence of bushfires across the Rockhampton Region has changed. Whilst there has always been a bushfire threat, the frequency of events has increased, bringing with it heightened intensity, harsher impacts, and a shifting risk profile to local communities, never experienced before.

The 2009 fire, which impacted Mount Archer and the Berserker Ranges, followed in subsequent years with fires at Kabra, Stanwell, and Mount Morgan highlighted the bushfire risk across the Region. Most recently, the high level of fire activity during 2018-2019 has made the Rockhampton Region Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) aware of the increased threat of bushfire across the Region.

The Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Strategy (2021-2025) provides 20 recommendations for the LDMG to consider; across nine pathway actions, linked to prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

### 2.1 Summary of Recommendations

S1. That all land managers across the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) consider bushfire risk in a more deliberate way within their policy framework when considering land used for community uses. For example, Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) completing a review of the land use policies, should include consideration for connectivity of environmental zones which could impact mitigation options for community use defined land in the next planning policy review cycle.

S2. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) performs a strategic review on its Tree Management Policy, and in consultation with the Strategy & Planning Section, consider where the planting ratio of 2:1 removal occurs to ensure bushfire mitigation is not compromised.

S3. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues its plans to review the Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme, ensuring that any amendments to the Planning Act 2016 and the Planning Regulation 2017 are reflected to ensure policies remain current. As part of this review, the Scheme should consider mechanisms to increase awareness to residents for the Bushfire Management Plans (BMP) to be updated when titles change, as well as for new Development Applications in high and very high bushfire prone areas.

S4. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues its commitment to update the granular-level bushfire prone land mapping in the Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme so the community and stakeholders can access the most current data.

S5. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) changes the current approach to the development application process, where assessors currently have discretion to approve development without the submission of Bushfire Management Plans (BMP), (outside of high and very high bushfire prone areas, which are mandatory).

S6. That using the standing item on Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) meeting agenda, the Chair of the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG), through the LDMG Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Member, provides the LDMG with:

- Seasonal bushfire risk outlook
- Identified areas of bushfire risk
- Mitigation activities planned and undertaken
- Residual risk remaining at the conclusion of mitigation activities. The Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) will use this information to inform the Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP) and manage areas of residual risk in relation to bushfire.

S7. That the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) works with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) to establish a tenure-blind approach to landscape-level mitigation activities (not just the high-risk areas in Catalyst), with a view to increase knowledge on regional mitigation, and how this can be used during the response phase of bushfires.

S8. That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) endorses the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) establishing two Locality Specific Fire Management Groups (LSFMG)s at:

- Mount Archer, by 30th June 2021
- Mount Morgan, by 30th June 2021.

Membership should include key land managers such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) and Department of Resources (DoR), local rural fire brigades, and staff from Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) civil and parks operations, relevant to each of these locations.

S9. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) establishes an internal Bushfire Prevention Working Group (BPWG) that meets quarterly, to coordinate RRC's cross-directorate bushfire prevention functions.

S10. That as part of reviewing the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)*, the current reference to Wildfire Alert Level (WAL) is removed and replaced with the current Bushfire Alert Level (BAL) and the arrangements in Recommendation 19 reflected.

S11. That as part of reviewing the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)*, a documented process is defined for the communication of changes in Bushfire Alert Level (BAL) to the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), and anticipated actions by the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) is articulated.

S12. As the lead agency outlined in the Queensland Bushfire Plan (QBP), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) considers the establishment of a regional Community Education Working Group for the local governments contained in the Rockhampton District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) boundary. The group should plan the engagement and community preparedness for bushfire within the all-hazard framework. The outcomes of these activities are reported to the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) periodically through the Chair, Area Fire Management Group (AFMG).

S13. That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues the work on behalf of the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) in relation to Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR). This work should inform planning for the LDMG where support is required at a regional level for these communities.

S14. The Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) review the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)* to ensure that its Plan is aligned to its member agencies strategies.

S15. That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) performs a bushfire hazard functional or desktop exercise between the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Incident Control Centre (ICC), in the next 12 months, to ensure that agency and LDMG plans are aligned, with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities trained and tested. The exercise should include the agency level responses to the new Bushfire Evacuation Plans for Mount Archer or Mount Morgan (BEP-MA and BEP-MM).

S16. That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) explores the standard of fire cover provided by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) in relation to the ability to contain fires to the smallest size through the application of their capabilities.

S17. The review of the *Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) Sub-Plan (2016)/Activation of Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) Sub-Plan (2016)* should include a flexible model of Stand Up. A scalable, pre-emptive activation of the LDCC, for days of forecasted Fire Danger Rating (FDR) of 'extreme' and/or 'catastrophic', could be considered to enable a prompter response to potential fires.

S18. That proactive Public Messaging is provided by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) on the days prior to 'extreme' and/or 'catastrophic' fire danger days in relation to community risk, utilising the advice in the Bushfire Evacuation Plans for Mount Archer or Mount Morgan (BEP-MA and BEP-MM).

S19. That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) should consider the liaison model to ensure information sharing between the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) and Incident Control Centre (ICC) is established early and maintained during the response phase. This should be embedded in the plan review process as outlined in Recommendation 11.

S20. Guided by the Inspector General, Emergency Management (IGEM) Review – Efficacy of recovery governance (Report 1: 2018-2019), the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) reviews the current Recovery Sub-Plan (2016) to seek opportunities to further involve the community in recovery plans to achieve a community led recovery approach in line with the Queensland State Recovery Plan.

By considering the above recommendations, the LDMG and its member agencies continue to plan in a modern way for bushfire management across the Region.

### 3 Introduction

Throughout this strategy, bushfire management has been aligned to some of the concepts and strategies contained in the *Queensland Bushfire Plan (2020)* (QBP). They are:

- **Land Use Planning** – how Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) can holistically review its policy framework on land use planning in relation to the bushfire management considerations.
- **Development Control (including Building Constructions and Standards)** – how RRC can strengthen the current requirement for development applications to have a compliant and useful Bushfire Management Plan (BMP).
- **Risk-Based Planning – Shared Operational Intelligence** – how the bushfire reporting arrangements can be enhanced between the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) and the LDMG including the establishment of two Locality Specific Fire Management Groups (LSFMG)s.
- **Risk Based Planning - Council Land Management** – the establishment of a RRC cross directorate working group and a central point for land management issues to provide a more strategic and connected approach to bushfire management.
- **Risk Based Planning - Seasonal Preparedness** – building a closer link between Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and the LDMG, and operational decision making for preparedness levels.
- **Risk Based Planning - Community Preparedness** – how QFES can lead a group to coordinate bushfire resilience in the community, and members of the LDMG integrates the work of the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) within this process.
- **Risk Based Planning - Bushfire Community Impact** – how the LDMG can build capability and capacity across member agencies to ensure all plans are aligned, trained, and exercised.
- **Risk Based Planning - Bushfire Management Accountability** – building on the relationship established in Seasonal Preparedness and how a closer liaison model could be considered between the LDMG and QFES in relation to operations and coordination centres, to ensure decision making is based on current, validated, and connected intelligence.
- **Risk Based Planning - Resilient Focused Bushfire Recovery** – how working with the current findings available from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) and the Inspector General Emergency Management (IGEM) can continue to deliver a modernised recovery model for the Region.

The Strategy is linked to legislation, plans, policies and reports, and has been informed by the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020) (the Study). It is one of the tools the LDMG may consider using to better understand and respond to the bushfire risk.

### 4 Drivers for Continuous Improvement – Bushfire Management in the Future

One of the key drivers for change, is the QBP. The QBP outlines new arrangements for the whole-of-government approach to bushfire prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

Additional drivers for this Strategy is the overall compliance of the LDMG to the following legislation and relevant reports:

- the *Disaster Management Act, 2003*
- the *Local Government Act, 2009*
- RRC responsibilities under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act, 2009*
- addressing the actions identified by the IGEM reports:
  - 2018-19 Report 2: The 2018 Queensland Bushfires Review
  - 2019-20 Report 2: Queensland Bushfires Review
- The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (the Royal Commission) Report 2020 (the Royal Commission).

The Commissioner, QFES, commends the QBP to all Queenslanders in stating, “*By working together with communities, other Government agencies and stakeholders in the public and private sectors, we are enabled to effectively manage our bushfire hazard. It is our shared responsibility to undertake those*



activities, which helps us to reduce the impact of bushfire and prepare our communities to respond and recover.” (QFES, 2020).

The release of the QBP, and this Strategy, were in response to the 2018 Central Queensland fires. Both documents provide updated planning information on the arrangements for the prevention of, preparedness and response to, and recovery from the increasing threat of bushfire across the Region.

*“The LDMG is responsible for developing and implementing the Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP) to manage disaster operations in the area. This includes the planning, organisation, coordination and implementation of all measures to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters within the Rockhampton Region.”* (RRC, 2020).

The implementation of this strategy will deliver an evidence-based approach to Bushfire Management across Rockhampton Region. If delivered effectively it will reduce risk, increase community understanding, and build resilience across the Region.

## 5 Pathways

### 5.1 Pathway Action 1 (Prevention): Land Use Planning



#### 5.1.1 Recommendation S1

That all land managers across the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) consider bushfire risk in a more deliberate way within their policy framework when considering land used for community uses. For example, Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) completing a review of the land use policies, should include consideration for connectivity of environmental zones which could impact mitigation options for community use defined land in the next planning policy review cycle.

**Responsible:** RRC – RRC Strategy & Planning Section **Target Date:** June 2022

#### 5.1.2 Recommendation S2

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) performs a strategic review on its Tree Management Policy, and in consultation with the Strategy & Planning Section, consider where the planting ratio of 2:1 removal occurs to ensure bushfire mitigation is not compromised.

**Responsible:** RRC – Parks Services and Strategy & Planning Sections **Target Date:** June 2022

#### 5.1.3 Current Situation

Land use planning and development assessment, as discussed in section 18 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020), in Queensland is administered under the *Planning Act 2016* and the *Planning Regulation 2017*. This is further detailed in the *State Development Assessment Provisions, State Planning Policy (SPP)*.

RRC approved the Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme with a major amendment in November 2019. This planning scheme is designed to support bushfire mitigation strategies through land-use planning and development. It currently applies to all those seeking to purchase and/or develop bushfire prone land across the Region.

Land Use Planning is an important function of RRC. It requires a balance of consideration between environmental, safety and growth outcomes.

*“From an environmental perspective, RRC applies a tree management policy to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to planting, maintenance, preservation, removal and replacement of trees within the public realm. Requests for the removal of street trees will be assessed in an objective and professional manner. RRC will explore all feasible options for resolving issues associated with trees in order to maximise the possibility of their retention. Trees that are removed will be replaced on a ratio of two trees replaced for everyone removed.” (RRC, 2017a).*

RRC has an *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2018-22* and this lists a number of key focus areas throughout. Relating to this strategy, it recommends sustainability to be embedded in procurement plans and procedures which need to be considered as part of ongoing land use planning into the future.

Recommendations S1 & S2 above contribute to the *Environmental Sustainability Strategy* being achieved. They do so by deliberately focussing on environmental area examination and its impact prior to being zoned for any public use. They further consider where tree planting should occur across the Region to increase the overall environmental sustainability, but in a bushfire safe way.

As Rockhampton continues to grow, all agencies face the challenge of balancing development, public safety and biodiversity in its planning strategies.

Demonstrating this in action, stakeholders advised (supported by a site visit) QPWS&P undertakes that balance between natural vegetation protection and the protection of assets through the diversification of vegetation with endemic flammable resistant plants. This allows for a sustainable and natural barrier to help protect an area which has been zoned as ‘residential’. In doing so, QPWS&P support the overall strategy of sustainable land use in that area

A further example of this is during 2009 and in 2020, RRC Parks Operations trialled the planting of resistant plants in the bushland interface across the Region to continue to achieve this balance.

When considering Land Use Planning in the future, bushfire risk should be included. For example, stakeholders shared their experience of the Mountain Bike Trail currently being constructed by RRC in Mount Morgan. The project, which will provide an extremely valuable asset to the Region, is currently being developed in an area determined as ‘very high’ fire danger. Stakeholders advised however, that at this stage, they are unaware of any risk assessment being undertaken and applied to this project.

Where land use allows for more community participation on lands, including opening up areas such as this new trail, considerations need to be applied for community safety. Provisions in any development of the land, and where a risk assessment indicates mitigation is not possible, then land use changes should be challenged.

In allowing the use of land for public and recreational use, and using the Mount Morgan Mountain Bike Trail example, it may include:

- the ability (physically and environmentally through other land parcels) to construct Fire Trails back to main roads off the mountain bike track.
- water points established on the mountain bike track.
- establishment of areas which bike riders, if trapped by fire, could reasonably have a chance of surviving.

These mitigation options are more realistic than trying to enact a hard closure on the trail during ‘extreme’ or ‘catastrophic’ fire danger days.

Land Use planning is the first layer of resilience for any community. By applying the relevant policies, it guides RRC to zone land in an appropriate way. The application of such policy is likely to reduce the impact of fire on individuals and communities and lay the foundation for community resilience prior to its development.

### 5.1.4 Supporting Finding

*“State and territory governments delegate some of their responsibilities to local governments. For example, local governments play a central role in land-use planning and the management of local roads, as well as the coordination of emergency centres and the provision of emergency relief. Ultimately, state and territory governments remain accountable, and should therefore ensure local governments have the support and resources they require to carry out their responsibilities.” (Finding 13) (The Royal Commission, 2020)*

### 5.1.5 Future Risks and Opportunities

Face-to-face interviews raised a consistent issue in relation to the RRC *Tree Management Policy*. This policy achieves good sustainable outcomes, where it replaces 2 trees for every one removed. From a strategic perspective, however, there is a need for RRC to reassess this policy. By doing so, it should ensure that the planting ratio of 2:1 considers planting locations and pattern in a more deliberate approach to support bushfire mitigation.

## 5.2 Pathway Action 2 (Prevention): Development Control (including Building Constructions and Standards)



### 5.2.1 Recommendation S3

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues its plans to review the Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme, ensuring that any amendments to the Planning Act 2016 and the Planning Regulation 2017 are reflected, to ensure policies remain current. As part of this review, the Scheme should consider mechanisms to increase awareness to residents for the Bushfire Management Plans (BMP) to be updated when titles change, as well as for new Development Applications in high and very high bushfire prone areas.

**Responsible:** RRC Strategy & Planning Section

**Target Date:** November 2021

### 5.2.2 Recommendation S4

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues its commitment to update the granular-level bushfire prone land mapping in the Rockhampton Region Planning Scheme so the community and stakeholders can access the most current data.

**Responsible:** RRC Strategy & Planning Section

**Target Date:** November 2021

### 5.2.3 Recommendation S5

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) changes the current approach to the development application process, where assessors currently have discretion to approve development without the submission of Bushfire Management Plans (BMP), (outside of high and very high bushfire prone areas, which are mandatory).

**Responsible:** RRC Planning & Regulatory Services and Strategy & Planning Sections

**Target Date:** June 2020

## 5.2.4 Current Situation

Research shows that RRC has an approved policy that supports the management of Development Applications, *Planning Policy – SC 6.5 Bushfire management planning scheme policy*, as further detailed in section 18.2 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020). This requires developers to have an approved BMP when building on bushfire prone land. RRC has a highly interactive platform (Rock e Plan) which allows residents to search property information, and one of the layers publicly available is the bushfire prone land mapping.

QFES provide the overall base layer of mapping for bushfire prone land. RRC then undertake to refine this data on a more granular level, which they plan to update in 2021. The advantage of updating this information is that the community can log onto the Rock e Plan and see the exact profile of bushfire risk to their area. A better understanding of risk increases the chance of the community taking personal action. By taking personal action, this increases personal resilience across the community.

Stakeholders have raised concerns that compliance of the submission of these BMPs is not consistent, and often Development Applications are approved at the discretion of RRC assessors, without a BMP or further stakeholder input. This could lead to dangerous situations, that aren't planned for, during bushfire events.

RRC has indicated that there are plans to update the Planning Policy in 2021 to reflect all current legislation and codes.

Additionally, stakeholders have raised concerns about the lack of requirement, with the sale of land, to update BMPs. These plans, if they exist, could be out of date and could decrease resilience and increase risk during a bushfire event.

By updating the Planning Policy, this improves community resilience through a better understanding of risk, how to plan for the occupant's safety, and that fire appliances have the best chance to defend the property in the event of fire.

## 5.2.5 Supporting Findings

*"Risk from natural hazards to lives and property is influenced by past decisions, such as how and where communities, businesses, infrastructure and homes were built. While the consequences may only be felt decades later, this risk is inherited by those who are responsible for the built environment today. This existing risk is often referred to as 'legacy risk'."* 19.14 (The Royal Commission, 2020)

*"Some Australians may not appreciate the extent of the risk they face, the self-reliance they need, or the range of things that may be necessary to cope with natural disasters. Some have only recently moved to a high-risk area. As temperatures rise and landscapes change, others may find that the risk has moved to them. It is understood that some Australians do not have the experience, knowledge and community ties necessary to manage disaster risk effectively."* (Finding 85) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

## 5.2.6 Future Risks and Opportunities

The Region predicts population growth in all the 'high' to 'very high' bushfire risk areas across demographic modelling. The increases in population range from 9.9% to 361% by 2036. (.ID, 2020).

With population growth there is potential for new residents, who do not understand bushfire risk, to relocate to hobby or small farm blocks, or along the bushland/residential interface, where they are exposed to this risk. This will be a new risk for new residents.

Community engagement and meaningful interaction to increase community understanding of risks should start at the point of the Development Application or the Transfer of Title. By doing so, those who have relocated from an area which is not prone to bushfire risk gain an understanding of their environment, and the impact bushfire may have upon them.

The Bushfire Evacuation Plan – Mount Archer (BEP-MA), completed in 2020, provides a range of recommendations to support the increase in knowledge of bushfire risk areas. These are linked to the plan and could be relevant for region-wide application.



### 5.3 Pathway Action 3 (Prevention): Bushfire Risk-Based Planning – Shared Operational Intelligence/Collaboration



#### 5.3.1 Recommendation S6

That using the standing item on Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) meeting agenda, the Chair of the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG), through the LDMG Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Member, provides the LDMG with:

- Seasonal bushfire risk outlook
- Identified areas of bushfire risk
- Mitigation activities planned and undertaken
- Residual risk remaining at the conclusion of mitigation activities. LDMGs will use this information to inform the Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP) and manage areas of residual risk in relation to bushfire.

**Responsible:** Chair, AFMG

**Target Date:** March 2021

#### 5.3.2 Recommendation S7

That the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) works with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) to establish a tenure-blind approach to landscape-level mitigation activities (not just the high-risk areas in Catalyst) , with a view to increase knowledge on regional mitigation, and how this can be used during the response phase of bushfires.

**Responsible:** AFMG Land Managers

**Target Date:** To be determined by QFES – recommended no later than 2022.

#### 5.3.3 Recommendation S8

That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) endorses the Area Fire Management Group (AFMG) establishing two Locality Specific Fire Management Groups (LSFMG)s at:

- Mount Archer, by 30th June 2021
- Mount Morgan, by 30th June 2021.

Membership should include key land managers such as Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) and Department of Resources (DoR), local rural fire brigades, and staff from Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) civil and parks operations, relevant to each of these locations.

**Responsible:** QFES Rockhampton Fire Management Group      **Target Date:** 30th June 2021.

#### 5.3.4 Current Situation

As prescribed under the *Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Act, 1990* an AFMG has been established for the Rockhampton Region. It is comprised of members from across the land management and bushfire management sector. Further detail can be found in section 16 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020).

Face-to-face meetings, and stakeholder groups advise that there would be benefit in increasing the interaction between the Rockhampton AFMG and the LDMG, with the AFMG actively reporting to the LDMG on risk.

Under the QBP, the LDMG is responsible for the management of residual bushfire risk. This leads to a requirement for a more cohesive and collaborative relationship between the AFMG and LDMG.

Observations from an AFMG meeting showed how the AFMG provides an annual Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP), treats identified risk areas, and ensures that those areas identified as “hot spots”, based on the risk assessment, receive the most attention for resourcing for that season.

QFES advises that, on behalf of the AFMG, it currently maps bushfire “hot spot” risks across the Region through a new information technology platform known as ‘Catalyst’. Each agency of the LDMG has access to the read-only version of this platform. QFES has advised of an issue with Catalyst and its capacity that could impact planning during a response. It relies on QFES entering the data from all agencies and is limited in the capacity of data it can take.

Research shows there is a current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the State (QFES and QPWS&P) and RRC which outlines the roles, responsibilities and performance indicators for the management of fire risk in the Mount Archer area.

While well intentioned, the MoU is cumbersome, and largely does not replicate, nor report on the work which is currently happening on the ground. With the implementation of the LSFMGs, this would likely remove the requirement for this MoU.

### 5.3.5 Supporting Findings

*“There are 51 AFMGs currently operating, which cover 64 local government areas (LGA). QFES is working with other areas to establish further AFMGs.*

*The AFMGs allow partners and stakeholders in the AFMG area to share information about bushfire risks and mitigation priorities to reach consensus on tenure-blind, joint priorities. QFES coordinates land managers’ efforts to assess and mitigate bushfire risk through leadership of these governance arrangements.*

*This includes chairing AFMGs and the State Interdepartmental Committee on Bushfires, and by providing tools and training to assess fuel loads. The training supports the application of an increasingly evidence-based approach with an emphasis on local place-based solutions”. (QFES, 2019)*

### 5.3.6 Future Risks and Opportunities

As bushfire risk increases across the Region, there will be a need to better coordinate resources at the local level. The LDMG and AFMG interactions should increase at a strategic level. The LDMG needs to further understand the current bushfire risk across the Region, and communicate the residual bushfire risk, which it cannot manage, to the District Disaster Management Group (DDMG).

The new allocation to the LDMG to manage residual risk, as outlined in the QBP, is one which needs to be explored further. There needs to be clarity around the ownership of risk as a land manager under the *Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Act, 1990* and the management of residual risk by the LDMG, which is established under the *Disaster Management Act, 2003*.

Important to note, the LDMG can engage with the DDMG on strategic-level risk, and how resources may be applied to treat, reduce or eliminate the community consequence.

QFES advises that the ‘Catalyst’ system has potential to provide up-to-date intelligence to the LDMG. In the performance of implementing this Strategy however, it is currently limited by capacity and QFES being the only agency able to enter data into the system.

In doing so, QFES needs to recognise the capability differences between agencies from a bushfire management perspective, and further increase the overall understanding of the system, and its ability to identify and manage risk across the entire LDMG.

Stakeholders almost unanimously raised the opportunity for resource-sharing between all agencies, including the use of plant, equipment, and personnel, when planning for risk-reduction through a tenure-blind, landscape, risk approach.

With an aging population, there is chance that if not documented, local knowledge could be lost. The two proposed LSFMGs, at Mount Archer and Mount Morgan, and the AFMGs work program should be centred around community-based risk planning and reduction and capturing this local knowledge.

The establishment of the LSFMGs will provide local input and knowledge to the AFMG about fire management in these two areas. Localised resource sharing at the agency level can also be explored to get the maximum benefit from any bushfire management strategy.

QFES advises that they are producing guidance for LSFMGs and there is in-principle support by key agencies to formalise the Mount Archer LSFMG as a state-wide trial.

The adoption of the LSFMG for Mount Archer would replace the expired MoU through a coordinated fire management agreement between the agencies, application of resources, and reporting on hazard reduction performance.

As discussed in face-to-face interviews, and from direct observation, the work that already occurs between the Department of Resources (DoR), RRC, and QFES at Mount Morgan also positions the agencies well to form an LSFMG within the 2021-2025 target time frame.

## 5.4 Pathway Action 4 (Prevention): Risk Based Planning - Council Land Management



### 5.4.1 Recommendation S9

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) establishes an internal Bushfire Prevention Working Group (BPWG) that meets quarterly, to coordinate RRC's cross-directorate bushfire prevention functions.

**Responsible:** RRC Disaster Management Unit **Target Date:** March 2021

### 5.4.2 Current Situation

RRC has a complex role across bushfire management as a land manager and regulator.

It was discovered during face-to-face meetings that RRC Bushfire Management is spread across seven functional areas of RRC. These areas work between the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery phases of disaster risk reduction.

Stakeholders provided examples of where RRC is involved in bushfire prevention and preparedness, particularly in and around Mount Morgan. RRC works with DoR and QFES, in Mount Morgan, to implement fire trails to break up the vegetation blocks and reduce fire spread.

To increase community resilience across the Region, Council can work together to coordinate the functions across the organisation to better plan, inform and regulate their communities. By doing so Council then increases resilience by integrating development and mitigation. Also, this enables people to make informed decisions before, during and after an event.

There was a clear theme from the interviews that RRC works closely with QPWS&P in the Mount Archer Area to reduce risks and improve access and provide fire line and trail works. Stakeholders also indicated that RRC conducts annual roadside slashing which reduces the risk of ignition and spread from Council controlled roads, and those which they are contracted to manage.

Council has a *Biosecurity Plan for Pest Management* (2017-2021), which outlines a strategy for the management of invasive weeds and plants. RRC commits to investigating additional, improved, alternative methods of control which includes fire.

The use of fire, backburning and other methods as part of controlling both biosecurity and fire hazard provides RRC dual benefits.

### 5.4.3 Recent Findings

*"Governments also own and manage land, property and other assets, including state forests and national parks, government buildings, and some critical infrastructure. Governments must manage risks to these assets, just as businesses and individuals must manage risks to their own assets."* (Finding 9) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

*"Invasive plants are also a significant problem for agricultural land users. The CRC for Australian Weed Management estimated that impacts of invasive terrestrial weeds on agriculture cost the Australian economy approximately \$4 billion per year (Sinden et al. 2004). As Queensland is Australia's second largest state and has the highest proportion of land area in any state dedicated to agriculture, the costs associated with lost production and weed control in Queensland are considerable."* (RRC, 2017b)

### 5.4.4 Future Risks and Opportunities

Consistent feedback from the workshops was that risk exists due to decisions made by one area of RRC but not necessarily communicated to other areas that manage the consequences. For example, a development that may mitigate or increase bushfire risk is approved by Planning and Regulatory Services, however, the relevant sections, such as Parks may not be advised when this occurs.

The increased focus, both at the state and federal levels, in relation to land managers being responsible to manage bushfire risk on their land is increasing and is likely to continue to do so in the future.

Coordinating the functions of bushfire management activities, include identifying risk, recommending the treatment of, and coordinating RRCs bushfire activities through the AFMG, would enable RRC, as a major land manager across the Region, to work in a more cohesive way to deliver prevention and mitigation actions and to be further connected into the LDMG.

This Strategy recommends the establishment of the Bushfire Prevention Working Group (BPWG) to coordinate bushfire prevention across RRC. The role is to work across the RRC BPWG membership to ensure that there is coordination and information sharing across directorates on the management of on-ground bushfire risk reduction efforts on Council owned land.

The group should liaise with the LFMGs and AFMG for technical and environmental expertise and work with state agencies to maximise the effort and coordination between RRC and the State and it recognises their role on the AFMG.



Proposed RRC Bushfire Working Group Membership and linkages to the LDMG



## 5.5 Pathway Action 5 (Preparedness): Risk Based Planning - Seasonal Fire Risk



### 5.5.1 Recommendation S10

That as part of reviewing the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)*, the current reference to Wildfire Alert Level (WAL) is removed and replaced with the current Bushfire Alert Level (BAL) and the arrangements in Recommendation 19 reflected.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.5.2 Recommendation S11

That as part of reviewing the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)*, a documented process is defined for the communication of changes in Bushfire Alert Level (BAL) to the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG), and anticipated actions by the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) is articulated.

**Responsible:** LDMG (QFES)

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.5.3 Current Situation

According to the LDMP, the LDMG takes a coordinated approach to all-hazard preparedness, based upon its obligations under the *Disaster Management Act, 2003*.

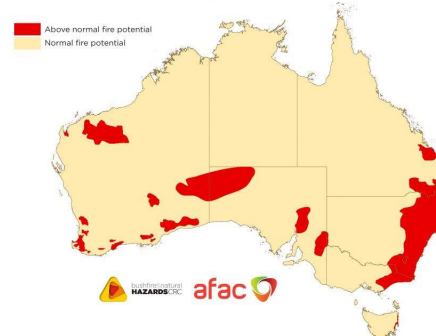
Stakeholder workshops confirmed that the LDMG acknowledges that bushfire risk continues to increase across the Region and further research is available in section 9 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020). This strategy provides a focus on the reduction of risk based on seasonal outlook.

Research shows there is clear evidence of changes to bushfire risk from season to season. This is largely based on the winter conditions which set up the structure of vegetation leading into summer.

There will be years of minimal risk, some in which grassland areas are more fire-prone, and other years where risk is focused on forested areas.

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority (AFAC) regularly provide national bushfire outlooks, of which QFES, through the AFMG to the LDMG, then provide regional outlooks, based on the conditions.

#### SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK 2018



Seasonal Outlook 2018 Source: AFAC

The LDMG has the ability to be informed directly by the AFMG on the relevant bushfire risk and can use this intelligence to form annual strategies to address the current or predicted risk.

QFES advised they have an operational position in relation to bushfire preparedness levels, known as the Bushfire Alert Level (BAL) ranging from level 1-3 (RRC, 2016). The BAL is informed by fire activity, forecasted fire weather and any other matters which QFES determine a need to elevate the bushfire preparedness level.

By understanding the BAL and reflecting this in the disaster management plans, this allows for a consistent understanding of risk. If QFES and the members of the LDMG understand the current risk to the Region based on climatic drivers, everyone can consider their planning in a coordinated approach.

By having a coordinated planning setting, communities are far more likely to be informed of risk, which will lead to evidence-based decision making. Supporting the key messages, such as each household having a bushfire survival plan, increases the chances of these messages being enacted as the risk escalates allowing for personal preparedness to increase and an overall increase in community resilience.

Research shows and presented in section 15 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020), that the RRC Emergency Dashboard provides the community with trusted information and provides direct feeds on bushfire incidents issued by QFES.



Proposed BAL Communication Flow between AFMG and LDMG

#### 5.5.4 Future Risks and Opportunities

A more connected and enhanced relationship between the AFMG and LDMG provides a significant opportunity to increase the knowledge of bushfire risk across the Region.

There is an opportunity for the Chair, AFMG to formally notify the Chair, LDMG (or delegate - Coordinator Disaster Management) of BAL changes to ensure cohesive decision-making occurs at the strategic and operational level.

Upon notification of a change in BAL, the LDMG may choose to adjust its preparedness (as member agencies, or as a group).

The changes which the LDMG may choose to take include forward planning for a Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) activation and is connected intricately to actions outlined in the below Pathway Action (Response) sections.

### 5.6 Pathway Action 6 (Preparedness): Risk Based Planning - Community Preparedness



### 5.6.1 Recommendation S12

As the lead agency outlined in the Queensland Bushfire Plan (QBP), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) considers the establishment of a regional Community Education Working Group for the local governments contained in the Rockhampton District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) boundary. The group should plan the engagement and community preparedness for bushfire within the all-hazard framework. The outcomes of these activities are reported to the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) periodically through the Chair, Area Fire Management Group (AFMG).

**Responsible:** QFES

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.6.2 Recommendation S13

That Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) continues the work on behalf of the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) in relation to the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR). This work should inform planning for the LDMG where support is required at a regional level for these communities.

**Responsible:** RRC Disaster Management Unit **Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.6.3 Current Situation

There are several community education and engagement activities that already occur across the member agencies of the LDMG. These activities are delivered by both employees and volunteers. Research shows that funding for these programs range from agency budgets, grants received from agencies such as the QRA for the 'Get Ready' program, and donations.

QFES advised of their annual programs, such as 'Operation Knock-Knock', a service that provides one-on-one engagement with the community. This is in addition to brigade-level engagement and other initiatives such as mass media and social media campaigns about bushfire safety.

Face-to-face meetings with QPWS&P told of the engagement with the community through smoke advisories and other information when undertaking hazard reduction work.

Stakeholders spoke about the benefit of collaborating with the RRC Disaster Management Unit (DMU) to utilise the community education trailer and collaborate in planning and delivering various events to support the community with bushfire preparedness, however the limited capacity of the DMU should also be considered.

By implementing a model of a community education committee there are likely efficiencies that can be found. With QFES leading the group, the state level priority messages are able to be shared and integrated into agencies engagement campaigns. Where there are messages that complement each other from agencies, such as RRC and QFES, these can be analysed for co-branding and considering where one agency could attend an event to represent both messages to increase capacity.

Once the community is aware of its risk, the sharing of information supports both capacity and capability. Whether it be on preparing their homes or deciding on when to leave during a bushfire event, it increases resilience individually and increases chance of assets being protected by emergency services. Both in turn lead to a more resilient community which are likely to return with far less losses after a bushfire event.

From direct observation, the LDMG appears to be committed to the DIDRR group, which is increasing the integration of those most vulnerable in the community with RRC and support organisations. This group is currently working to identify how communities and organisations can best work with this vulnerable cohort to ensure their safety and welfare is managed appropriately during disaster events.

As was recently reflected in the Royal Commission, this Strategy strongly advocates for personal preparedness, alongside agency preparedness. Resources will always be limited on bad fire danger days. By working with the community to become more resilient, the reliance on emergency services during these events will reduce.

## 5.6.4 Supporting Findings

*“Individuals and communities play a role in their own preparedness, but governments should educate people and provide accessible information to help them make informed decisions and take appropriate action. This is necessary because managing disaster risk is inherently complex.”* (Finding 10) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

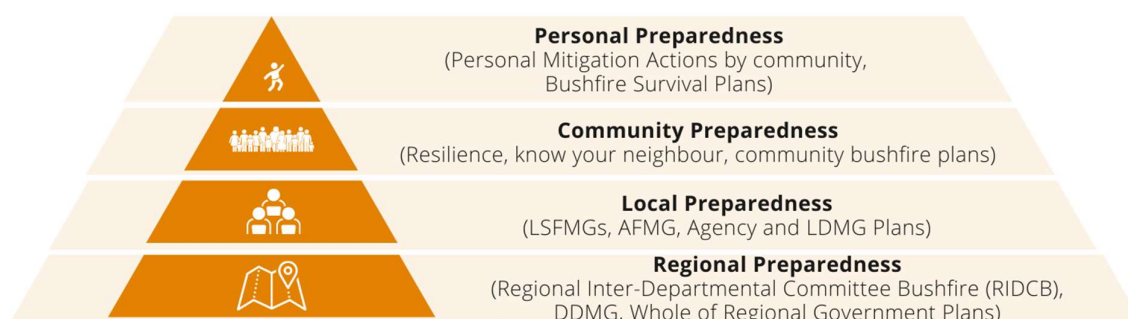
*“It is widely recognised that individuals need to prepare for and manage the risk of natural disasters, to the extent that they are able to do so. They need to take steps to mitigate the risks they face and know what to do when disaster strikes. Individuals, like governments, need to consider disaster risk holistically and take action on multiple fronts. While individuals will have varying abilities to manage risk for themselves, and varying vulnerabilities, there are a number of things that most people can do.”* (Finding 81) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

## 5.6.5 Future Risks and Opportunities

As fires become more severe, the elements of personal and community-level preparedness will be important to understand. Challenges include:

- Where response agencies are unable to reach individuals and/or communities.
- Communities without plans, or with plans that haven’t been practiced and understood by all relevant household and community members.
- A lack of understanding of community risk.

To address these challenges, this strategy proposes a multi-tiered, community-led, preparedness model for consideration:



Rockhampton Region proposed LDMG Bushfire Resilience Structure

## 5.7 Pathway Action 7 (Response): Risk Based Planning - Bushfire Community Impact





#### 5.7.1 Recommendation S14

The Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) review the *Bushfire Sub-Plan (2016)* to ensure that it is aligned to its member agencies strategies.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

#### 5.7.2 Recommendation S15

That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) performs a bushfire hazard functional or desktop exercise between the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Incident Control Centre (ICC), in the next 12 months, to ensure that agency and LDMG plans are aligned, with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities trained and tested. The exercise should include the agency level responses to the new Bushfire Evacuation Plans for Mount Archer or Mount Morgan.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** August 2021

#### 5.7.3 Recommendation S16

That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) explores the standard of fire cover provided by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) in relation to the ability to contain fires to the smallest size, through the application of their capabilities.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

#### 5.7.4 Current Situation

As per the *Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (QSDMP)*, the LDMG recognises that QFES is the lead agency in the response to bushfires across the Region. During these events, the LDMG has a critical role to manage community consequence and ensure that any impacts to the community are responded to.

Fire Danger is calculated by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and is a calculation based predominantly on temperature, humidity and wind speed. Fire Danger Index (FDI) is not the same as the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) – it is a major factor (but not the only one) used to determine the Fire Danger Rating. There are two types of Fire Danger Index – one for forest fires (FFDI) and one for grass fires (GFDI). Fire Danger Ratings are provided by QFES, on their webpage, as a 4-day forecast (BoM, 2020).

Based on the FDR, QFES may react with additional preparedness activities in relation to standing up the Regional Operations Centre (ROC) or similar. QFES advised that if fires are existing, they may increase resources on the fireground and in the Incident Management Team (IMT).

Interview results show that currently there is no automatic notification to, or reaction from, the LDMG on issues relating to predicted FDR, and what they may need to manage from a community impact perspective e.g., evacuation centres etc.

Research and face-to-face meetings identified that the LDMG plays an important role in managing community impact from bushfires, including around evacuation planning. During the 2018 bushfires, the Region saw over 10,000 people evacuated from Gracemere in a chaotic and uncoordinated manner. To continue learning from this event, RRC increased its capability and capacity in evacuation planning and has commenced planning in the form of the Bushfire Evacuation Plan – Mount Archer (BEP-MA) and Bushfire Evacuation Plan – Mount Morgan (BEP-MM).

By holding an exercise focused on bushfire management, this will lead to capability building at all levels. By having each representative of each agency with a better understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, this leads to better relationships. Exercises provide an ideal environment for learning and testing of systems so that when activated, people are ready, and relationships are formed.

#### 5.7.5 Supporting Findings

*“The importance of local knowledge to disaster management, and particularly to disaster response, was emphasised by many people who provided input, including firefighters and the public. State, territory*

and local governments expressed strong support for the principle and stressed the need for 'deep engagement' with affected communities. A locally-led response was described as 'one of the strengths of the disaster management system' and a 'foundational principle.'" (Finding 18) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

### 5.7.6 Future Risks and Opportunities

Research from across the Region and the State show the need for LDMGs to prepare for bushfire risk by clarifying roles and responsibilities, building capability, and practicing the arrangements for command, control and coordination centres. Currently during the fire season there is no process for the LDMG to monitor the FDR and make decisions based upon this.

If ratings are not monitored there could be a lack of situational awareness, which could lead to community impact not being considered – such as the case with the 2018 Gracemere evacuation, when the FDR was predicted to be 'Extreme' for the day but ended up as 'Catastrophic'. Stakeholders expressed concern that the advice from QFES was not flowing in a quick enough manner to be able to make informed and timely decisions.

The RRC Disaster Management Unit (DMU) receives a range of notifications from QFES to inform the Local Disaster Coordinator (LDC) when there is a heightened bushfire risk. This strategy seeks to make more formal arrangements for QFES and LDMG decision making during these periods. This will ensure incident and community responses to any potential bushfires is better connected.

Applying the lessons identified from the 2018 bushfires, a number of locality-specific bushfire evacuation plans have been developed. The BEP-MA and BEP-MM are examples of plans that support the *Evacuation Sub-Plan (2016)*. Extending this work to other localities across the region which can be contextualised to local areas will further enhance bushfire preparedness in the future.

If the community have an understanding of the evacuation expectations, then this elevates resilience. People understanding what their capacity is, how they can assist the vulnerable in the community, when and where to go, reduces the burden on emergency services, and leads to better community-based decisions. The LDMG ensuring it is clear on these responsibilities, will only enhance the leadership of community resilience.

The review of firefighting arrangements in the Mount Archer area shows that in the Rockhampton Region area, it is covered by Fire and Rescue. This is different to the eastern side which is covered by the Rural Fire Service. Further details of firefighting capability across the region is documented in section 17 of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020).

The 2014 Bushfire Strategy recommended the establishment of a Rural Fire Brigade in Mount Archer. We believe the intent of this recommendation was to ensure that suitable equipment and volunteers were available to augment the response by Fire and Rescue. This strategy in the drafting stage supported the recommendation to form a Mount Archer Rural Fire Brigade. During the stakeholder consultation period, QFES advised that this recommendation would be contrary to the legislation, however this is not supported by Division 3, s 79 of the Fire and Emergency Services Act, 1990, which states "Any group of persons may apply to the commissioner for registration as a rural fire brigade."

QFES advised that the inability to establish a Rural Fire Brigade in the Urban area may possibly be in an internal document. At the time of release of this document, QFES have not provided through official advice. The review continues to support the establishment of a Rural Fire Brigade in Mount Archer, however in line with the interim QFES advice, Recommendation S16 has been amended for the standards of fire cover to be explored further by the LDMG with QFES.

There is an opportunity to further expand community knowledge of these plans and how to use them.



Linkages between Control and Coordination

## 5.8 Pathway Action 8 (Response): Bushfire Management Accountability



### 5.8.1 Recommendation S17

The review of the *Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) Sub-Plan (2016)/Activation of Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) Sub-Plan (2016)* should include a flexible model of Stand Up. A scalable, pre-emptive activation of the LDCC, for days of forecasted Fire Danger Rating (FDR) of 'extreme' and/or 'catastrophic', could be considered to enable a prompter response to potential fires.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.8.2 Recommendation S18

That proactive Public Messaging is provided by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) on the days prior to 'extreme' and/or 'catastrophic' fire danger day in relation to community risk, utilising the advice in the Bushfire Evacuation Plans for Mount Archer and Mount Morgan (BEP-MA and BEP-MM).

**Responsible:** QFES and LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.8.3 Recommendation S19

That the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) should consider a stronger liaison model to ensure information sharing between the Local Disaster Coordination Centre (LDCC) and Incident Control Centre (ICC) is established early and maintained during the response phase. This should be embedded in the plan review process as outlined in Recommendation 11.

**Responsible:** QFES and LDMG

**Target Date:** June 2021

### 5.8.4 Current Situation

Stakeholder workshops demonstrated that there is a strong working relationship between all of the member agencies.

Research suggests that traditionally riverine flooding had been the highest risk to the Region, and the LDMG is responsible to lead both the incident and the disaster management responses. Face-to-face interviews and the LDMG's 2020 desktop and functional exercises confirmed that the LDMG is well-practiced in these events and can respond effectively.

As bushfire risk continues to increase, the LDMG advised that they are committed to solving complex issues as a group by respecting each other's roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. This is also achieved through a strength-focused lens to bring the best response for the community.

Previous events have shown that some bushfires may result in Queensland's Disaster Management Arrangements (QDMA) being enacted. Activation of these arrangements is not dependent on a disaster being declared and is determined by the respective disaster management group, in accordance with their plans.

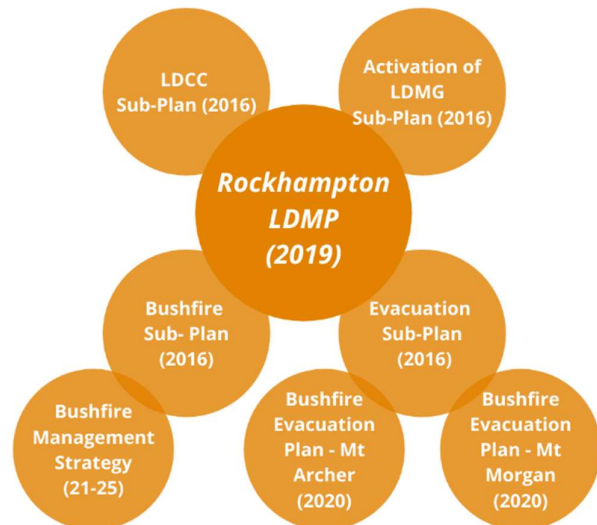
Where this occurs, QFES remains the primary agency for bushfire response and coordinates with the LDMG. Section 16.2 Response, of the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020) further outlines responsibilities of agencies.

In accordance with the QBP, if a disaster situation is declared, pursuant to the *Disaster Management Act 2003*, the relevant disaster management group is responsible for managing the bushfire event (QFES, 2020).

In addition to specific agency assistance being provided to QFES, components of the LDMP may be activated to support operations. Activation of the LDMP will be at the request of the QFES Incident Controller, Regional, or as determined by the LDMG Chair or LDC (QFES, 2020).

Depending on the severity, or potential severity of the event, support operations may include the need for evacuations and the establishment of evacuation centres with associated personal services being provided. Activation of the LDMG will be as per the 'Activation of LDMG Sub-Plan (2016)'.

Research shows that QFES provides effective advice via social media on days of heightened fire danger. However, research showed that there has not been a proactive public messaging campaign at a coordinated level when 'extreme' to 'catastrophic' fire danger days are forecasted.



Rockhampton LDMG Response Planning Structure

Stakeholders advised that in the past, the LDCC has primarily filled the role of the lead agency (for flood) and the subsequent community impact. For bushfires, a paradigm shift is required as QFES becomes the lead agency.

From direct observation and research, it is noted that the LDCC has trained staff who are well-versed in the systems. Expanding their knowledge in a non-LDMG led event, such as a bushfire, will continue to improve systems.

### 5.8.5 Future Risks and Opportunities

Intelligence feeds between QFES and the LDMG can be strengthened.

The LDC, or Chair, LDMG, have the authority to activate the LDCC. The Rockhampton LDMG is currently reviewing its *LDCC Sub-Plan (2016)* and there is an opportunity now to consider a more scalable activation model where a scalable, and pre-emptive decision to activate the LDCC on predicted 'extreme' or 'catastrophic' FDR days may be made.

The role of the LDCC during bushfires should focus on planning for effective disaster management, coordination of public messaging, planning for community impact, such as evacuation management, and resourcing the primary agency, QFES, for their response to the fires.

A proactive approach in the case of a forecasted catastrophic FDR is to stand up the LDCC with a level of staffing commensurate with the risk. This could see a number of staff working from the LDCC performing their business as usual (BaU) role but be ready to respond at short notice.

Key functions of Intelligence and Planning would occur in the LDCC to monitor conditions and, where fire exists on the landscape, rapidly plan for the activation of evacuation centres, or where required, provide RRC supporting capability, such as plant, to QFES or other agencies.

Opportunities exist for the LDMG to be proactive in Public Information provision, as outlined in the Bushfire Evacuation Plans (particularly for Mount Archer). For example, on the day before, or morning of, forecasted 'catastrophic' fire danger days, target communications to the residents identified at 'extreme' risk (such as those at the summit of

Current Process

Proposed Process

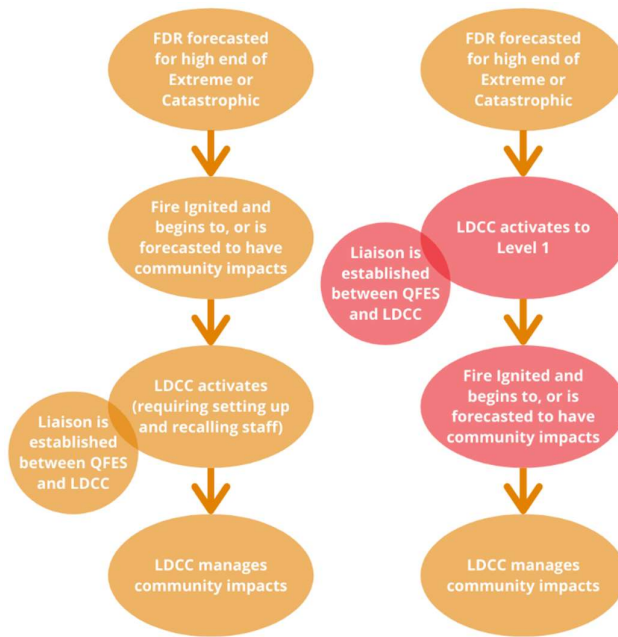


Mount Archer) to relocate for the period given the high probability that evacuation options will erode rapidly if there is a fire in the area.

By doing so, the community understand in plain language how the current bushfire risk could affect them. They will understand not to expect a helicopter, nor a fire appliance, and that the increased threat may require them to consider and/or implement their bushfire survival plan. By doing so, having the shared understanding with the community, a level of resilience continues to increase during operational events with some perhaps deciding to leave the day before, or morning of these bushfire weather “spike” days.

A summary of concerns of what stakeholders raised as a proactive approach to bushfire management is:

- Active advice from the QFES LDMG representative on risk and likelihood of problematic fires.
- Early advice to the LDMG on high-risk problematic fires.
- Pre-planned, trained and exercised, liaison and intelligence from QFES to create situational awareness to inform planning.
- An appropriate posture of the relevant LDMG plans and LDCC activation based on actual and potential risk.



Proposed LDCC Stand Up model for Catastrophic Days

## 5.9 Pathway Action 9 (Recovery): Resilience-Focused Bushfire Recovery



### 5.9.1 Recommendation S20

Guided by the Inspector General, Emergency Management (IGEM) Review – Efficacy of recovery governance (Report 1: 2018-2019), the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) reviews the current Recovery Sub-Plan (2016) to seek opportunities to further involve the community in recovery plans to achieve a community-led recovery approach, in line with the Queensland State Recovery Plan.

**Responsible:** LDMG

**Target Date:** March 2022

### 5.9.2 Current Situation

Stakeholders advise that the LDMG is committed to positive and resilient outcomes to the community during the recovery phase.

The LDMG demonstrates its understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the *Queensland Recovery Plan (2017)* and research indicates that the LDMG has coordinated many effective recovery operations, including flood, fires and other hazards over the past 20 years, which provides a sound platform for continuous improvement. Section 18.3.2. Recovery, in the Rockhampton Region Bushfire Management Study (2020) further details the recovery arrangements.

The LDMG embraces relationships with key agencies and the roles they play in providing additional capacity and capability to the LDMG during recovery, including:

- Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA)
- Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE).

### 5.9.3 Relevant Findings

*“There is broad acceptance across all levels of government and communities of the importance of locally-led recovery. The role of local governments in facilitating locally led recovery processes will vary, depending on jurisdictional legislation and emergency arrangements. Generally, it involves local level planning and delivery of a broad range of services to communities”* (21.19) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

*“Local governments will generally provide relief services and recovery information to communities, remove debris and support clean-up, coordinate local relief funds for those directly affected by disasters and conduct damage assessments. They also manage the replacement and repair of their own assets. Local governments coordinate recovery efforts by appointing recovery coordinators, establishing local recovery committees, and leading the development of local recovery plans – capturing the needs and aspirations of their communities.”* (21.20) (The Royal Commission, 2020)

### 5.9.4 Future Risks and Opportunities

Recovery for bushfires may encompass additional challenges, compared to those from more traditional hazards (such as flooding), due to:

- The Region’s communities have been exposed to seeing flooded homes which typically get washed out and then recovered.
- The community may not be prepared for the wide-scale complete destruction of properties.
- Return strategies for communities during flood events can be accurately forecasted (for example, when the river drops). Bushfires, however, can be highly unpredictable due to their erratic behaviour and increasing risks within localities etc.
- The *Queensland Government Action Plan to the 2019 IGEM Efficacy of Recovery Review* looked at the recovery arrangements across the state (IGEM, 2019a; IGEM, 2019b). They found a range of improvements at both the legislative and service delivery levels, which are relevant to this strategy.

By reviewing the *Recovery Sub-Plan (2016)*, there is opportunity for the LDMG to consider a number of these findings including:

- Greater clarity regarding the responsibilities for recovery at the community, local, and district levels based on the *Disaster Management Act, 2003*.
- Assistance to individuals and communities to take the lead in recovery and to ensure that community-led recovery becomes the future norm following disasters and other events, and links directly to building resilience.



Rockhampton LDMG Recovery Planning Structure

There is opportunity for the LDMG to mature the recovery arrangements and to document the differences between recovery in the bushfire context (as it is quite new to the Queensland context) compared to other events.

The reviewing and execution of recovery strategies which are aligned to the IGEM report will increase community resilience, which in turn should reduce the reliance on the agencies by the community to support them. There are many great examples where community led recovery has led to better community results. By taking this approach, it provides an environment for the Region's communities to thrive and become stronger in the face of adversity.

## 6 Monitoring and Reporting

The monitoring and reporting of this strategy is conducted by RRC DMU on behalf of the LDMG.

Following the principles of the *IGEM Lessons Management Framework*, an approach is followed where recommendations, once accepted by the LDMG, are reported regularly to the LDMG until completion.

The closing of any recommendation should consider the leading factors that were discovered as part of the Study, along with any associated mitigation activities which are recommended in the LDMG Bushfire Mitigation Plan (2021-2025).

The recommendations within this Strategy are designed to be achieved over 2021-2025 period. These are also designed to be followed with further recommendations to continue the enhancements for the next timeframe, where the same monitoring and reporting framework is implemented.

## 7 Annex A – References

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