

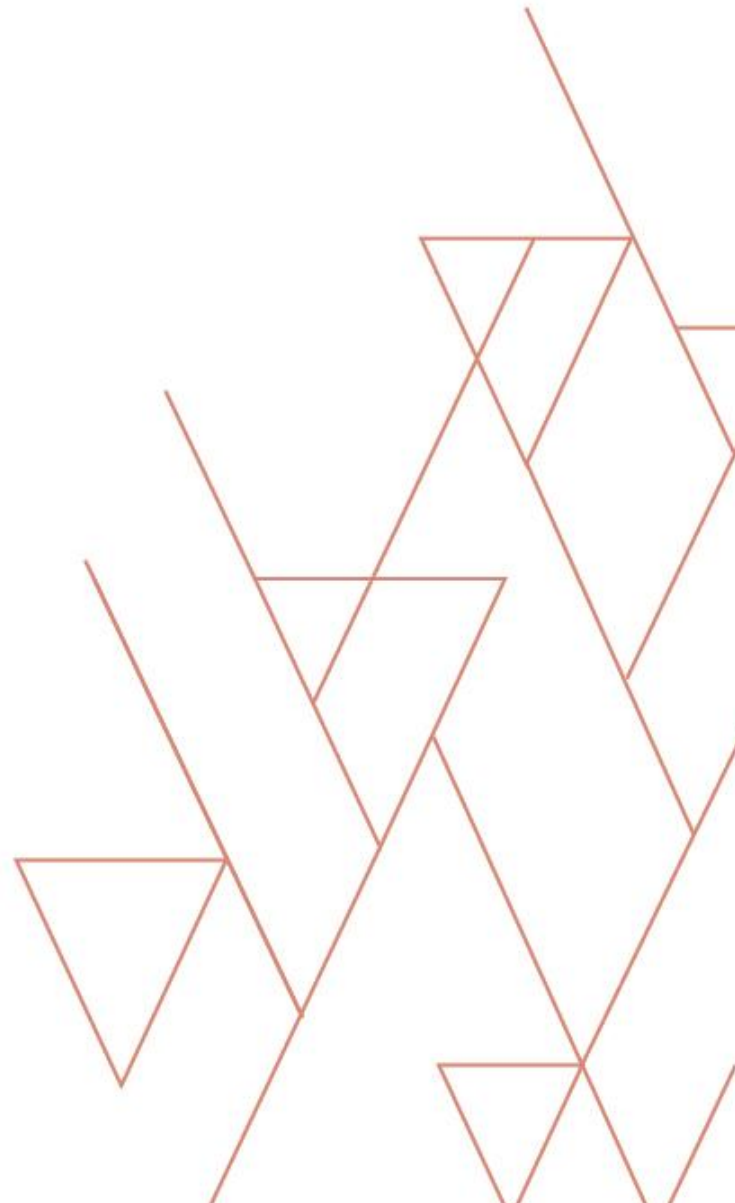


# Victorian Government Response to the Inspector-General for Emergency Management

Review of 10 Years of Reform in  
Victoria's Emergency Management  
Sector and;

Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire  
Season: Phase 1 Report

October 2020



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## 1. Foreword

In the decade since the 2009 bushfires, there has been significant reform in Victoria's emergency services sector. Progressively, we have moved towards a model that includes and encompasses all our emergency services and communities during a natural disaster.

Now, when we talk about the sector, we don't just mean our emergency service - but also how we work with the Victorian community, our not-for-profit stakeholders, business and industry partners, Traditional Owners, and all levels of government.

The Government notes the findings and accepts all recommendations of the Inspector-General of Emergency Management's (IGEM's) *'Review of 10 Years of Reform in Victoria's Emergency Management Sector'* and the *'Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season: Phase 1 Report'*.

The IGEM review sets the framework to support a strategic approach to further strengthen workforce capability, enhance sector-wide reforms, and build on the critical partnership between the sector and the community.

Over the last 10 years, Victoria has undertaken a comprehensive reform program based on the findings of reviews following significant emergencies, including the 2009 bushfires, the 2010-11 floods, the 2014 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire and the 2016 thunderstorm asthma event.

But there is more work to be done to embed change and fully ensure emergency management arrangements meet the state's needs and that our communities are best prepared for natural disasters. The ongoing challenges brought about by climate change add to the challenge of how we prepare for and reduce bushfire risk.

As we saw, the 2019-20 bushfire season coincided with the hottest and driest summer on record and resulted in widespread loss of life, property, wildlife, and environmental destruction across our nation.

Victoria alone experienced its most devastating bushfires since 2009, with an unprecedented scale and intensity causing much devastation and loss in towns in East Gippsland and North East Victoria.

The season provided an example of the changing nature of our work and the increasing pressures placed on the emergency management sector.

We have a large, committed and capable workforce who have first-hand experience of Victoria's natural disaster events. Many have dedicated the last 10 years to applying these lessons into our everyday practice, exploring new approaches, and testing new ideas. Importantly, they're committed to addressing areas of improvement and reform, so that the sector continues to evolve and meet the demands of protecting our state from natural disasters.

The Victorian Government appreciates the work undertaken by the Inspector-General for Emergency Management and presented in both reports. That includes the consultation across government, the emergency management sector, non-government agencies, and importantly, with those we serve to protect: Victorian communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Neville', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

The Hon. Lisa Neville  
Minister for Police and Emergency Services

## 2. Background

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM)'s Review of 10 years of reform in Victoria's emergency management sector.

Throughout 2019, IGEM conducted a Review of 10 years of reform in Victoria's emergency management sector (the Review). The Review considered the many changes to Victoria's emergency management arrangements since 2009, a period of notable reform following two significant Victorian emergencies – the 2009 bushfires and the 2010–11 floods.

The aim of the Review was to assess selected reforms that have occurred since 2009 to:

- ▼ determine whether they have been effective in delivering outcomes for the sector and the community, and
- ▼ evaluate levels of community satisfaction with those programs and their engagements with the sector before, during and after emergencies.

IGEM identified five key themes to scope and guide the Review, following consultation with the emergency management sector and the community:

- ▼ Community safety and resilience
- ▼ Governance
- ▼ Sector capability and capacity
- ▼ Community engagement and preparedness
- ▼ Rebuilding and recovery

The Review noted how far the sector has come in 10 years and the many improvements made since 2009 in areas such as information and warnings, sector capability and interoperability, community-centred initiatives and statutory planning reforms.

Since the 2009 Victorian bushfires, enormous transformation has taken place in the state's emergency management system, strengthening the focus of agencies to work in a more effective and integrated way. It also highlighted where further improvements are needed to ensure emergency management arrangements meet the needs of a changing community and landscape.

IGEM provided its report to the Victorian Government in December 2019, during a significant fire season. The Victorian Government has therefore considered this report and its recommendations in conjunction with the subsequent IGEM Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian fire season (the Inquiry).

## 2.1. IGEM’s Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian fire season

The Victorian Government requested that IGEM conduct an Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian fire season (the Inquiry). It is being conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: Community and sector preparedness for and response to the 2019–20 summer season

Phase 2: Progress and effectiveness of Victoria's immediate relief and recovery arrangements.

The objectives of Phase 1 of the Inquiry are to:

- ▼ describe the preparedness and response arrangements in place leading into the 2019–20 fire season
- ▼ summarise the preparedness and response activities conducted prior to and during the 2019–20 fire season
- ▼ compare the activities conducted with those planned, to consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of preparedness and response arrangements in Victoria
- ▼ evaluate sector and community satisfaction with preparedness and response activities and identify learnings and opportunities for further improvement.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are provided in **Appendix 2**.

This document provides the Victorian Government’s response to all recommendations from the Review and the Inquiry’s Phase 1 Report. A more detailed implementation plan to support this response will be released by mid-2021. Both responses will be supported by the development of a roadmap for the emergency management sector, which will outline the strategic plan for reform over the coming decade, building on the initial actions outlined in this response.

## 2.2. Impacts of the 2019–20 Victorian fire season

Victoria's 2019–20 fire season was unprecedented and one of the most significant to occur in Victoria during the past decade. Beginning on 21 November 2019, when heat waves accompanied by strong winds ignited 60 fires across the state, ongoing fires and treacherous conditions placed Victorian communities across the eastern part of our state in continual danger, causing widespread damage and stretching the capacity of our emergency management sector. By its end, 2,963 grass fires and 545 forest fires had burned 1.5 million hectares of land (including 1.3 million hectares of public land).

Tragically, five people died in Victoria, including firefighters protecting the lives and property of others.

More than 1,000 properties were destroyed, and more than 120 communities in East Gippsland and North East Victoria were directly affected. Smoke covered Melbourne, other metropolitan areas and regional areas. Over 50 per cent of the likely state-wide habitat of 244 species was impacted, and hundreds of millions of animals died, either from the fires or from habitat destruction.

The fires also had significant impacts on infrastructure and the economy, including livestock losses of more than 7,500 animals; impacts to tourism; sustained power outages; losses of telecommunications connectivity, leading to a loss of 000 capacity and limited access to emergency warnings; and damage to 1,400 km of priority arterial and 5,000 km of local roads and 10,000 km of roads on the public land estate.

On 2 January 2020, the Premier declared a state of disaster under the Emergency Management Act 1986 — the first time that power had been used — providing an unambiguous message to the community about the gravity of the situation and the need to evacuate fire-prone areas. The declaration provided the Minister for Police and Emergency Services with the power to direct and coordinate the activities of government agencies; suspend Acts or regulations; commandeer any property; control and restrict entry into, movement within and departure from the disaster area or any part of it; and compel evacuations from the disaster area (with certain exceptions).

The declaration, coupled with strong and timely messaging, enabled the large-scale evacuation of tens of thousands of people from multiple



townships across eastern Victoria, with the broad support of affected communities.

The response of Victoria's emergency management sector was unprecedented. More than 1,500 firefighters were deployed to work on active fires, supported by more than 50 aircraft. As the duration, scale and consequences of the event stretched State capacity, requests for assistance were made interstate, to the Commonwealth and internationally.

Interstate and international firefighters provided invaluable support to the Victorian response. This included 274 firefighters from the United States, 134 from Canada, 7 from Queensland and 3 from Tasmania. Material support and offers of assistance from across the globe were provided to Victoria, including personnel from around the world.

The assistance provided by the Australian Defence Force (the ADF) at the request of Victoria, provided essential and timely support, including for evacuating thousands of people from Mallacoota and providing urgent relief services to at-risk communities. The ADF also requested further military support from a range of countries, including Fiji, Japan, Papua New Guinea and Singapore.

A large workforce of personnel from the government, not-for-profit and private sectors supported incident, regional and State control centres, and contributed to large-scale evacuations, relief efforts, health and smoke monitoring, road clearance and other clean-up works, animal welfare, and engagement with communities. That workforce continues to support ongoing relief and recovery for affected communities. Extensive clean-up and rebuilding work in fire-affected areas are in progress throughout Victoria.

While the 2019–20 fire season response demonstrated the strength and innovative approaches of Victoria's emergency management framework, it also highlighted improvement opportunities. The sector will continue to work with communities, evolving and adapting to the challenges posed by increasingly complex and severe natural disasters.

### **2.3. Key issues raised by IGEM 10-year review and the 2019-20 Phase 1 report**

The IGEM's review of the past 10 years of reform highlights how far the sector and Victoria's communities have come in preparing for and responding to emergencies. This is further supported by our response to the 2019-20 Victorian bushfires, which posed unprecedented challenges to our emergency services, communities, businesses and visitors.

Both IGEM reports also highlight that we can expect to continue to be challenged by increasingly frequent, severe and unprecedented events, and so we need to continue to improve our approach to preparing for and responding to bushfires. Perhaps most importantly, we need to improve how we work together to understand and reduce our risk from bushfires.

Our work in emergency management should be driven by shared outcomes and a systematic assessment and understanding of risk. These are foundational elements of emergency management, and the IGEM points to the need for continued improvement in our approach to risk assessment at all scales as a basis for decision making and investment.

Central to our success in facing the challenges of the future is embedding and building on our shared responsibilities within emergency management. This means greater understanding of the roles and expertise across government, business, communities and individuals, as well as finding new ways to form partnerships and collaborate before, during and after emergencies.

The IGEM reports point to many advances in the way we are working together, but points to the need for greater consistency and coordination in how the sector engages with communities and empowers community-led involvement in all stages of emergency management.

Victoria's volunteers are critical to community preparedness, response and recovery from all emergencies, and more must be done to engage, train and retain volunteers in all aspects of emergency management. Volunteers form a vital part of the emergency management system and it is critical that volunteers are recognised for the selfless contributions they make to the sector and for their communities.

It is also increasingly important for partnerships to be formed and strengthened between the emergency management sector and the private, not-for-profit and community sectors, within Victoria and beyond. All of us rely on interconnected systems, which become more important during an emergency. This was particularly evident during the 2019-20 bushfire season, which saw a number of communities faced without power, telecommunications or access for several days or even weeks. The emergency management sector must anticipate and prepare for these events and have the partnerships in place for rapid and coordinated response when needed. This includes provision of relief, reinstating services (including reopening of roads) and repatriation of communities as quickly as possible.

The IGEM reviews have found that community information and warnings have significantly improved over the past decade, particularly through dissemination of the VicEmergency platform. However, the 2019-20 bushfires highlighted the importance of community information and warnings being available: through multiple channels, to culturally diverse audiences, and consistently across borders.

A key focus of the IGEM's reviews has been the need to improve our ability to reduce bushfire risk through land and fuel management activities. The Victorian Government already invests significantly in reducing bushfire risk through fuel management on public land – maintaining bushfire risk at or below 70% across the state. The IGEM reviews call for changes to the current arrangements to see fuel management more effectively used to reduce risk on roadsides and on private land. This is a central focus of the Victorian Government's Safer Together policy, which promotes the sector working as one, and in partnership with communities, to target fuel management activities to where they are most effective in reducing bushfire risk. The IGEM also calls for a review of current risk reduction targets and greater transparency and accountability in implementation and reporting across all land tenures for fuel management.

With the frequency, intensity and unpredictability of events expected to increase in a changing climate, our communities and emergency services will continue to be challenged. Concurrent and prolonged events, such as the 2019-20 fire season, will stretch the available pool of resources and personnel in emergency management. Extended fire seasons place pressure on the availability of aerial and incident

management resources. Maintaining levels of readiness to respond to bushfire requires significant resources and there is increasing reliance on interjurisdictional cooperation. The IGEM reports point to the increasing pressures on the operating model of the current emergency management arrangements, which require more fundamental changes than building more of the same.

## **2.4. What changes can Victorians expect in the lead-up to the 2020-21 fire season?**

### **2.4.1. Working together to build community resilience**

Continuous improvement of emergency preparedness in Victoria is critical. As the state prepares for more intense and frequent natural disasters, the emergency management sector is evolving its response, to better prepare, protect and engage with the community, ahead of the 2020-21 bushfire season.

Listening to and sharing information with communities is central to the way the sector continues to evolve. Emergency services, agencies, departments, businesses and communities share the responsibility to protect the state from bushfires. Working together is the best way to reduce risk and help communities to stay safe over summer.

### **2.4.2. Preparing and protecting communities: a shared responsibility**

One of the most significant challenges in a shared responsibility is ensuring everyone has a clear understanding of what this means in practice and is equipped with the information and tools to act.

Victoria's first State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), was released in September 2020 in the lead up to the 2020-21 fire season. The SEMP lays out what is expected of everyone involved in bushfire response, including emergency management agencies, community groups and networks, businesses, local government, individuals and households.

The SEMP forms part of Victoria's new emergency management planning arrangements, including new arrangements at regional and local levels. Together, these planning reforms will provide critical guidance for communities, ensuring they understand what they can

expect in terms of support - and what is expected of them - in the event of an emergency.

#### 2.4.3. Warnings, advice and community preparedness

Immediate, real-time warnings are critical to supporting communities to make life-saving decisions. Significant improvements are being introduced to provide residents and visitors to our regions with the information they need, when they need it.

Content changes will be made to the VicEmergency app and website, to better accommodate needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, ahead of the 2020-21 fire season. The platforms' effectiveness in delivering vital messaging – currently to a broadcast region 50km across Victorian borders – will be reviewed, to ensure it is meeting the need to provide clear, consistent and timely information.

The government will continue to invest in the annual Victorian fire season public information campaign, which targets travellers through multi-channel CALD advertising. A key component of the campaign is using postcode data to reach people in real time based on their current location. This has been used successfully for education and emergency information and will be continued in future campaigns.

#### 2.4.4. Improvements in sector capability and capacity

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring ongoing capacity and capability building of our career and volunteer emergency management workforce, to keep all Victorians safe.

At the State Control Centre (SCC), we are implementing a new workforce for the SCC, which will see 46 new full-time positions created to support the centre's operations.

The emergency management sector will also roll out pre-season preparedness briefings earlier, including the state seasonal outlook, to inform localised briefings and training sessions across regional and municipal levels.

This will mean that the SCC will no longer have to rely on a surge workforce and will always have people available to fill roles across a number of core functions, including public information, intelligence, logistics, planning and risk and consequence functions.

This investment will ensure the SCC is working to a new model that is more sustainable, effective and efficient. Further opportunities for improvement will also be investigated at regional and incident control levels.

#### 2.4.5. Improving and understanding fuel management

Managing fuel loads ahead of time can reduce the severity of fires, and make them easier to attack, fight and contain.

Fuel management will be a key focus in preparation for the 2020-21 bushfire season. Bushfire-affected communities will be better informed and more involved in the work being undertaken to protect them – as well as provided an understanding of the limitations, trade-offs and risks of planned burns.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) 2019-20 fuel management report, to be released before the end of the year, will show communities where fuel management has been undertaken and how effective it has been in reducing bushfire risk. Further work is also underway to improve the management of the state's strategic fuel breaks, which are critical as the window for planned burning narrows due to climate change. DELWP and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) will also release updated regional Bushfire Management Strategies, guiding fuel management activities across public and private land.

The Safer Together program – which engages agencies to work together on fire risk reduction - will be expanded to further engage EMV, CFA, the Department of Transport (DoT) and its agencies, and local government, in bushfire preparedness.

#### 2.4.6. What can Victorians expect from its emergency managers in future seasons?

The actions being undertaken now by the Victorian Government and the emergency sector will lay the groundwork for future improvements in emergency preparedness, as changes to the state's population and environment continue to evolve.

Communities will continue to be informed and involved in the planning and decision-making required to protect them from bushfire risk. Regional and municipal emergency management planning processes

will guide the response to emergency risk at state, regional and local level.

Gaps identified in Victoria's emergency management operating model will be addressed through strategic recruitment across paid and volunteer workforces. The workforce of the future will feature sophisticated risk and data modelling, advanced technology and leadership development pathways, supporting the response to more frequent and severe emergency events.

Further integration of land and fuel management will occur across public and private land, and the role of Traditional Owners will be crucial in informing changes to fuel management.

Improvements in the procedures for evacuations - including training, exercising and personnel specifically skilled to undertake evacuation and traffic management roles - will help to ensure the safety of the community.

Finally, supporting affected communities in recovery will always remain central to the government's bushfire response. We will continue to listen to, learn from and provide every measure necessary to help Victorians as they recover and rebuild following future bushfires across the state.

### 3. Introduction

The Review of 10 years of reform in Victoria's emergency management sector report (the Review Report) highlights how far Victoria has come in 10 years and the many improvements made since 2009. Despite these improvements, the review also acknowledged that there is opportunity to further improve the sector.

Since the 2009 Victorian bushfires, major transformation of the state's emergency management system has taken place to make communities safer and more resilient. These changes meant Victoria was better placed for the significant challenges of the 2019-20 bushfires.

But as the 2019-20 bushfire crisis has shown, we cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to the safety of Victorian communities. There is more work to be done to embed change and ensure emergency management arrangements meet the needs of a changing community. The Inquiry Phase 1 Report provides further recommendations to support the continuous improvement of our emergency management system based on the response and experiences of Victorians from these fires.

Victoria is in the midst of immense social, technological and environmental change. In a global context, changes in climate, population, technology and extreme events are creating both impacts and opportunities for individuals, communities and societies. They affect the social, economic and environmental systems we rely on to function and survive and can often have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of our society.

Operating in this complex and rapidly changing environment will continue to challenge our emergency management sector – how it works with communities, how it adopts new technologies and draws on global intelligence, the way it is governed, the legislation, architecture and funding models that currently support it, the capability of the workforce and the relationships between various agencies, businesses, non-government organisations and communities.

Victoria's emergency management system has evolved considerably over the past decade. The current emergency management operating model has served the state well over the last 10 years but is now challenged by an evolving and increasingly complex emergency management environment.



With predicted increases in the number, type and duration of emergencies, the ability to manage these events within traditional arrangements will continue to be stretched. Understanding and preparing for future risks is critical to building resilience in Victoria and delivering world-leading emergency management.

In responding to these recommendations, the Victorian Government recognises Traditional Owners' deep connection with, knowledge of, and rights in respect of the lands and waters of Victoria. We are committed to partnering with Traditional Owners in land management and will work closely with Traditional Owners as we implement these recommendations.

Separately, it is important to acknowledge the specific and unique role of local government in emergency management and in the implementation of IGEM's recommendations. The Victorian Government acknowledges the significance of the reforms proposed in the Review report, across the themes of sector-wide outcomes; risk assessment; community preparedness; sector capability and capacity; and recovery. These themes are consistently considered through the recommendations of the Inquiry Phase 1 Report which provides the additional theme of delivering fuel management. It is within this context that the response is prepared.

A successful sector of the future will be agile and forward-looking – able to harness community skills and goodwill, deploy resources quickly to meet emerging crises, employ new technology, continuously adopt better practices and stay ahead of the game.

The Victorian Government's response to the two IGEM reports sets out what will be done in the short-term, with further details on actions to be provided in an implementation plan in mid-2021. The response also commits the Victorian Government to develop a roadmap for the emergency management sector, which will include a long-term strategic plan for reform.

## 4. IGEM 10 Year Review of Victoria's Emergency Management Sector: Response to individual recommendations

### 4.1. Sector-wide outcomes

#### 4.1.1. Recommendation

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, in collaboration with the community and emergency management sector:

- a) develops and implements a sector-wide outcomes framework that aligns to the strategic and operational elements of all phases of emergency management. The framework must:
  - ▼ develop emergency management outcomes that reflect the Victorian whole-of-government outcomes
  - ▼ identify outcome measures and associated indicators
- b) provides guidance and support for the sector on how to incorporate emergency management outcomes and measures in emergency management planning, policy development, decision-making and assurance activities.

#### 4.1.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Current actions underway:

- ▼ Over the past 12 months, outcomes frameworks have been developed by the CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV). BRV has also developed a recovery outcomes framework for the 2019-20 bushfires.
- ▼ In addition, Victoria's Resilient Recovery Strategy details the strategic approach to improving Victoria's recovery systems, setting agreed recovery outcomes to guide recovery programs, with consideration of local community outcomes and priorities.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ EMV will consult and collaborate with relevant agencies to develop a sector-wide outcomes framework to measure the

effectiveness of the emergency management sector in supporting resilient communities and providing reliable, integrated and timely services. This framework will be finalised in the 2021-22 financial year.

## **Response background**

Frameworks already in place for emergency services agencies draw on the broader outcomes framework of the Victorian Government. It is clear that improved performance across the sector is essential to building the resilience of Victorian communities.

A sector-wide outcomes framework will draw on these established frameworks and use performance and assurance measures already in place. EMV will continue to work with agencies to agree on common or complementary indicators, measures, and data collections methods. This standardised approach will allow for greater consistency and stronger implementation of lessons management and evaluation practices and will inform the Victorian Government's decision-making on targets and standards.

## **4.2. Risk assessment**

### **4.2.1. Recommendation**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, in collaboration with the community and emergency management sector:

- a) updates the 2012-2013 State Emergency Risk Assessment to include strategic and operational elements of emergency management. This should consider:
  - ▼ place-based risk assessment developed through the community emergency risk assessment process
  - ▼ consequence management capability across the sector
  - ▼ existing risk models for natural and human-induced hazards
- b) provides guidance and support for the sector on how to incorporate the updated risk assessment in emergency management planning, policy development, decision-making and assurance activities.

## 4.2.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### **Actions**

Immediate actions:

- ▼ In October 2020, EMV will release an updated Emergency Risk in Victoria report. The report will identify the highest priority risks in Victoria at a state level, inform actions and activities to be undertaken to mitigate these risks, and manage the consequences where risks cannot be mitigated.
- ▼ EMV delivered the first Victorian SEMP in September 2020, which set out arrangements to manage the impacts of these risks before, during and after emergencies at a state level.
- ▼ Guidelines to facilitate the development of Regional Emergency Management Plans (REMPs) were published in September 2020 and Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) will be published in December 2020.
- ▼ Using these Guidelines, EMV and sector partners will support regional emergency management planning committees to develop and endorse REMPs by December 2020 and municipal emergency management planning committees to update their existing MEMPs to align with reformed planning arrangements.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ By December 2023, as part of the three-year rolling program of assurance, the Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPs) will be revised by local government and community representatives, using existing risk assessment processes that align with the national risk assessment guidelines and consider state, regional and community emergency risk assessments.
- ▼ In 2021, EMV will lead the development of a contemporary and systemic approach to identifying and mitigating risk across Victoria:
  - this approach will consider key drivers of change and make use of predictive forecasting tools to inform data analytics and intelligence, and

- it will establish partnerships with other jurisdictions and research organisations to establish and embed world-leading practice for risk assessment and the technological interdependence of systems and services.

### **Response background**

Victoria's risk profile is evolving, driven by a changing climate, demographic shifts, technological innovation and changing community expectations and engagement.

By 2030, as a result of climate change, the emergency management sector will be responding to more intense and frequent emergencies including floods, bushfires, sea-level rise, heat events and storms. Biosecurity and pandemic risks will also change under future climate scenarios. Further, there may be increased risks associated with hazardous waste, cyber-security and the technological interdependence of systems and services.

In such an environment, it will be critical for the emergency management sector to work across government, the private sector and with communities to find ways we can all mitigate risks and manage the consequences of emergencies into the future.

The development of more sophisticated approaches to risk modelling and forecasting as a basis for building and deploying our emergency management capabilities will see investment and planning based on an understanding of the risks faced by Victorians and our ability to best prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from them.

## **4.3. Community preparedness**

### **4.3.1. Recommendation**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, in collaboration with the community and emergency management sector, develop and promote a preparedness strategy that:

- ▼ is relevant to all emergencies
- ▼ is aligned with existing community resilience initiatives

- ▼ includes a clear, consistent and accessible preparedness message
- ▼ builds on the community preparedness work of the Australian Red Cross
- ▼ considers leading practice from other jurisdictions.

#### 4.3.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM’s recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Current actions underway:

- ▼ The Vic Emergency App and website have been designed to promote shared responsibility for all emergencies, providing platforms to share information to empower individuals to make informed decisions and better support their communities. The ‘Prepare and Get Ready’ section of the Vic Emergency App and website detail what preparedness arrangements communities can undertake to avoid situations becoming an emergency, and what they can expect in response to one. EMV will continue to enhance this section to inform action-based community preparedness.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV delivered the first Victorian SEMP in September 2020. The SEMP clarifies the roles and responsibilities of different actors with a shared responsibility for emergency management, including:
  - individuals and households
  - community groups and networks
  - small, medium and large businesses, and
  - the emergency management sector.
- ▼ EMV will work with the sector to review existing community resilience and preparedness strategies and initiatives and measure their effectiveness. The review will inform a future performance framework aligned with sector outcomes developed through the response to the Review’s sector-wide outcomes.

- ▼ As part of this review, EMV and sector partners will consider integrating and building on the community preparedness work of the Australian Red Cross and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (or revised national policy) and exploring best practice from other national and international jurisdictions.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ EMV will work with the sector in partnership with communities to review the Victorian Preparedness Goal by June 2022. The updated and refreshed Victorian Preparedness Goal will further promote the principles of shared responsibility and self-reliance and will be informed in part by the outcomes of the review's risk assessment recommendation. It will also build community awareness of the capability, capacity and resilience required in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies.

## **Response background**

All Victorians have a critical role in contributing to the preparedness, capability and resilience of themselves and their communities. The concept of shared responsibility will assume growing importance in an environment of increasingly severe and frequent natural disasters, pandemics, disease outbreaks and security threats.

The Victorian Government acknowledges that shared responsibility does not mean equal responsibility. There will be areas where the emergency management sector is better placed to act and respond. However, community members and businesses must also play their part in preparedness – mitigating risk to themselves and others, supporting response activities by the emergency management sector where appropriate, and meeting their own relief and recovery needs where possible.

### **4.4. Sector capability and capacity**

#### **4.4.1. Recommendation**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria streamlines the existing suite of work underway to identify gaps in the sector's capability and capacity to

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deliver comprehensive sector-wide capability development strategy for operational and strategic personnel – including volunteers – that considers:

- a) all capabilities identified through the Victorian Preparedness Framework and additional strategic emergency management capabilities
- b) all capability development mechanisms (including accreditation, work-based learning, training and exercising).

#### 4.4.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

##### **Actions**

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV will establish a full-time, permanent workforce for the SCC, significantly increasing the State's standing capacity to deliver public information, intelligence, logistical support, emergency management planning, and emergency risk and consequence analysis. This will be achieved through a funding commitment of \$17.06 million to support an additional 46 permanent staff based at the SCC.
- ▼ EMV will lead a strategic review of Victoria's network of Incident Control Centres and Regional Control Centres, focusing on capacity and resourcing to ensure a sustainable, effective model that is able to respond to large, concurrent and prolonged events. This includes a commitment by the Victorian Government of \$1.762 million to deliver a strategic review by May 2021.
- ▼ EMV will work with the sector to review the emergency management operating model and will provide a report to the Victorian Government by the end of 2021 that will identify options for a future emergency management operating model, including a recommended approach. The report will consider the use, scope and functionality of current assets, systems, processes and functions in line with the Victorian Preparedness Framework.
- ▼ EMV will review the current training and accreditation program for incident management personnel, to inform an action plan that



enables the building and sustainment of the sectors capability requirements into the future.

- ▼ Identify resourcing, training and professional development needs to enhance leadership and operations managed by the three tiers of command and control within the state's emergency management arrangements. This will include training and development needed to support ongoing interoperability and resource integration across the sector.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ By June 2022, EMV will prepare a detailed implementation plan to enact the Victorian Government's preferred emergency management operating model.
- ▼ The future operating model will support and inform the development of a fit for purpose incident management platform identified in response to Recommendation 14 of the Inquiry Phase 1 report.
- ▼ EMV will work with the sector to review and enhance the Victorian Preparedness Framework to ensure it is fit for purpose and identifies the needs of the sector. The review will consider learnings from the public health response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and recent bushfire seasons. This process will determine the service offering of the sector and potential measures to address identified gaps.

## **Response background**

In order to fully support Victoria's emergency management arrangements and meet the challenges of the future, Victoria requires a new emergency management operating model. A comprehensive review of the current model will commence in 2021, considering future risk forecasting, the drivers of change, new and emerging technology and data. The review will also establish the requirements and needs of a future emergency management workforce, including attracting and retaining staff and volunteers, and modern training and development opportunities.

## 4.5. Recovery

### 4.5.1. Recommendation

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria, in collaboration with the community and emergency management sector, develop comprehensive operational recovery guidelines that include:

- ▼ coordination arrangements for recovery activities across all tiers of emergency management
- ▼ pre-emergency and post-emergency recovery roles and responsibilities of the sector at the state, regional and municipal levels
- ▼ Community recovery roles and responsibilities
- ▼ Methods to provide logistical and financial support to impacted communities
- ▼ Consideration of how to support community-led initiatives
- ▼ Tools and approaches to share knowledge across councils and community service organisations
- ▼ How to consider and plan for long-term recovery needs.

### 4.5.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Immediate actions:

- ▼ BRV will continue to coordinate and report on the Victorian Government's implementation of the State-wide Bushfire Recovery Framework and Action Plan for communities impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires.
- ▼ The Victorian Government has also developed its Economic Recovery and Social Recovery Frameworks to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. All departments will continue to prioritise the delivery of initiatives that stimulate economic and social recovery.

- ▼ EMV, working with BRV, will develop operational recovery guidelines to pilot with key partners and local government through the 2020 -21 fire season.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ EMV, working with BRV and key partners, will finalise and maintain operational recovery guidelines for all emergencies.

### **Response background**

The Victorian Government notes the commencement of Phase 2 of the Inquiry, focused on relief and recovery arrangements. These and subsequent actions to improve Victoria's relief and recovery activities will be further informed by consideration of the Inquiry's Phase 2 findings, observations and recommendations.

## 5. IGEM Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season: Response to individual recommendations

### 5.1. Preparedness arrangements

#### 5.1.1. Recommendation 1

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that responder agencies and Emergency Management Victoria review preparedness arrangements to ensure procedural documentation (including plans), recruitment, briefings and training are completed before significant seasonal events are likely to occur.

Seasonal preparedness should culminate in attestations of assurance to confirm that:

- a) documentation reflects relevant risks and potential impacts
- b) briefings and training schedules have been tailored and delivered according to seasonal influences
- c) recruitment strategies enable the engagement of adequate numbers of appropriately skilled personnel for the entire season.

#### 5.1.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Current actions underway:

- ▼ EMV is working with the sector to adapt its preparedness planning arrangements, including training and accreditation, to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions.
- ▼ The emergency management sector is on track to deliver earlier pre-season preparedness briefings, including its State seasonal outlook, to inform briefings and training sessions across regional and municipal levels.
- ▼ Ahead of this fire season, the Victorian Government will invest in sector capacity and capability through recruitment, training and accreditation of key roles. FFMVic has already started recruiting

project firefighting personnel in response to the seasonal outlook, to ensure adequate time for capability development training.

#### Immediate actions:

- ▼ Before the 2020-21 bushfire season, EMV will release an updated Emergency Risk in Victoria report, confirming the highest priority risks in Victoria.
- ▼ EMV released the first Victorian SEMP in September 2020, which articulates Victoria's preparedness arrangements, including the command and control structures and plans and procedures necessary to efficiently and effectively undertake emergency responses.
- ▼ In the lead-up to the 2020-21 fire season, EMV will work with responder agencies to review arrangements to ensure all required plans and procedures, recruitment, briefings and training are in place and completed. This will culminate in an attestation by the EMC to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on heightened preparedness arrangements informed by seasonal risk factors on behalf of responder agencies, to be delivered by 1 November 2020 and in subsequent years.

#### Longer term actions:

- ▼ The State Bushfire Plan is a sub-plan of the SEMP and the principal document that guides the state's bushfire emergency arrangements. EMV and the sector will commence a review of Victoria's State Bushfire Plan ahead of the 2021-22 fire season.
- ▼ The attestation process will be broadened to address a wider range of emergency risks, including non-seasonal risks. This will reinforce the requirements for the sector to be prepared to respond to any emergency event on any day of the year.

### **Response background**

The achievements of Victoria's emergency management sector in responding to the severity and duration of the 2019-20 bushfires reflect the dedication and preparedness of the sector, and Victorians. Continuous improvement of preparedness arrangements is particularly crucial in the context of climate change, as demonstrated by the

ferocity of the fire conditions experienced across Australia during the 2019-20 bushfire season.

In the lead-up to the 2019-20 bushfire season, the EMC attested to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on heightened preparedness arrangements on behalf of responder agencies. The Victorian Government is on track to release a series of emergency management policy and planning tools in 2020, which will capture relevant risks, potential impacts on communities and help to plan and prepare for these risks.

The emergency management sector, while in transition to a new operating model as described in response to the Review reports' Sector Capability and Capacity recommendation, will maintain assurance in its preparedness arrangements, particularly in the lead-up to seasonal events of higher risk.

The diversity of control agency responsibility across a range of hazard types, including other departments and agencies with differing ministerial oversight, will need to be reflected in future attestations.

## **5.2. Fuel management**

### **5.2.1. Recommendation 2**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the State review (and where necessary amend) legislation including but not limited to the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, Forest Act 1958 and Local Government Act 2020 to:

- a) clarify accountability for fuel management across land and fire agencies, public authorities, councils, private organisations and individuals
- b) define shared responsibility for fuel management across land and fire agencies, stakeholders and community
- c) enable organisations with a legislated responsibility for fuel management to conduct fuel management on behalf of other organisations on land outside of their legislated land tenure, where invited to do so

- d) provide consistent protections to all personnel, including volunteers, when carrying out fuel management functions on behalf of their legislated organisation.

## 5.2.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Immediate actions:

- ▼ DELWP will continue to work with Traditional Owners to implement the Cultural Fire Strategy.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ DELWP and DJCS will lead a review of the legislative framework and consider legislative change to:
  - enable more effective planning and delivery of bushfire management across different land tenures and responsible agencies
  - support greater interoperability
  - ensure all firefighters (including volunteers) have sufficient legal protections when carrying out fuel management, and
  - consider any relevant legislative recommendations from the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.Legislative changes will be introduced in 2022.
- ▼ The review will:
  - ensure accountabilities for fuel management are clear, and consistent with the principle of shared responsibility
  - maintain individual rights and responsibilities while also enabling land and fire agencies, public authorities, councils, private organisations and individuals to work together to manage fuel on public and private land
  - enable land and fire management departments and agencies, including DELWP, the CFA, local government, DoT

and other land managers, to conduct fuel management on any land where mutual agreement exists

- identify any measures required to better enable Traditional Owners to carry out cultural fire
- ensure consistent protections and immunities for all personnel, including volunteers, when carrying out fuel management activities on behalf of their legislated organisations
- consider the role of an expanded Code of Practice for Bushfire Management
- examine the need for change to regulatory tools, such as fire permits, and
- enable the end-to-end bushfire risk management framework for all public and private land in Victoria, such as powers to create plans or standards for how land and fire agencies manage bushfire risk.

- ▼ DELWP will work with road and rail managers, local government and other stakeholders to ensure clarity on regulatory controls and deliver efficient approvals processes relevant to activities to reduce bushfire risk, such as permitted native vegetation removal and permits to burn off while ensuring environmental protections are maintained.

## **Response background**

In reviewing and considering legislative changes, DELWP and DJCS will examine how the laws currently governing fuel management are working, and the areas where they can be adapted to meet contemporary and future needs. The review will be carried out in consultation with key stakeholders, including land and fuel managers, local government and the emergency management sector. The objective of the review will be to develop a system that requires and enables land and fire managers to work together as part of an end-to-end framework to manage bushfire risk with clear planning, coordination and accountability.

Furthermore, the Victorian Government is committed to supporting Traditional Owners to expand their use of cultural fire to heal Country



and meet important cultural obligations. While cultural burning does not have fuel management as its primary objective, there are some complementary risk reduction benefits delivered from some cultural burning practices. DELWP will continue to work with Traditional Owners to implement the Cultural Fire Strategy.

### 5.3. Safer Together

#### 5.3.1. Recommendation 3

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the State support the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) and its partners to expand the Safer Together program to:

- a) increase program uptake and adoption by legislated fuel management organisations including local government, the Department of Transport and VicTrack
- b) implement a consistent risk-based approach to fuel management program planning from strategic through to operational and tactical levels supported by appropriate risk assessment tools, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting mechanisms, and
- c) develop common spatial datasets for use by all road managers, standardising road and roadside fuel maintenance levels based on bushfire risk and sharing resources to maintain continuous roadsides managed by multiple parties.

#### 5.3.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Immediate actions:

- ▼ DELWP will deliver an expanded Safer Together program, including increased involvement for EMV, the CFA, DoT and its agencies, and local government by December 2020.

- ▼ DELWP and CFA will release updated regional Bushfire Management Strategies to guide fuel management activities across public and private land by December 2020.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ DELWP, in collaboration with EMV and other land and fire managers, will lead the development of a whole of sector strategy to guide land and fire management in the context of a changing climate, growing population and changing demographics by November 2021. In addition to public land, the whole of sector strategy will consider how to effectively support road managers and local governments to mitigate bushfire risks on roadsides and in high bushfire risk local government areas.
- ▼ DELWP will review risk-based strategic and operational planning frameworks and processes to better incorporate roadsides and private land by December 2022.
- ▼ DELWP will review the fuel management Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework and the annual Fuel Management Report to identify changes required to more fully incorporate private land and roadsides. The review will be complete by July 2021.
- ▼ DELWP, in partnership with DoT, local government and other road and rail managers, will review existing roadside spatial datasets to identify gaps and opportunities to improve the consistency and usability of these datasets to manage bushfire risk on roadsides and rail corridors.

### **Response background**

The Safer Together program will be expanded to include road and rail managers to achieve enhanced integration in planning and delivery. Additional focus will be given to building local government participation and capability.

This will complement legislative reforms in response to Recommendation 2, aiming to increase the standard and effectiveness of bushfire fuel management across all land, including on roadsides and local government land. This will be supported by strategic and operational planning across all public and private land, including

roadside vegetation management, to improve the resilience of the road network for higher risk communities following fire.

The Victorian Government will develop a whole of sector strategy to guide how agencies adapt bushfire management under a changing climate and changing demographics. This will refresh and expand on the current Safer Together program.

DELWP will work with DoT, other road and rail managers and local governments to improve the consistency and usability of spatial datasets for bushfire risk management on roadsides.

## 5.4. Coordination and implementation

### 5.4.1. Recommendation 4

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that in conjunction with Inquiry Recommendation 2, the State establish or assign responsibility to a single body or entity to lead and coordinate the implementation of evidence-based fuel management policy, practice and assurance and reporting on activities on both public and private land in Victoria.

### 5.4.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

The Victorian Government will provide a full response to this recommendation as part of its implementation plan.

## Actions

Interim actions:

- ▼ DELWP will deliver an expanded Safer Together program, including increased involvement for EMV, the CFA, DoT and its agencies, and local government by December 2020, as outlined in response to Recommendation 3.
- ▼ DELWP and CFA will release updated regional Bushfire Management Strategies to guide fuel management activities

across public and private land by December 2020, as outlined in response to Recommendation 3.

## 5.5. Community engagement

### 5.5.1. Recommendation 5

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) – with support from all legislated fuel management organisations for public and private land – lead a community engagement process to improve the Victorian community's understanding of:

- a) the purpose of Victoria's fuel management program and the concept of residual risk
- b) the conditions under which fuel management effectiveness is limited
- c) how fuel management is planned, conducted, evaluated and reported.

### 5.5.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ DELWP and CFA will release updated regional Bushfire Management Strategies by December 2020, with information to help communities understand bushfire risk at a landscape level.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ By June 2021, DELWP will update and simplify:
  - information provided about Victoria's fuel management program,
  - the concept of residual risk and how fuel management effectiveness is evaluated, and

- what bushfire risk means at state, regional and community levels.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ As part of the review of the risk target committed at Recommendation 9, DELWP, in collaboration with EMV and land and fire agencies, will develop a community engagement process that:
  - builds understanding of the fuel management program and its limitations
  - makes targets more meaningful and understandable to the community, and
  - supports transparency and shared responsibility.
- ▼ By December 2021, DELWP will develop shared guidance and principles for engaging with communities and with other agencies involved in bushfire risk management. The shared guidance and principles will clarify accountabilities and ensure a community-centred and consistent approach.
- ▼ The whole of sector strategy for bushfire management will draw on behavioural change work being carried out under Safer Together to support people to take action to address bushfire risk in their local area and on their own land.

## **Response background**

The community is entitled to understand what land and fire agencies are doing to reduce bushfire risk, why they are doing it, and whether it is working. This is an important step in building a shared responsibility for bushfire preparedness.

Victoria has good reporting and assurance processes and works hard to genuinely engage Victorians on matters that interest and affect them. But this inquiry has identified opportunities for this to be improved.

DELWP will work with fuel management agencies to design an engagement process in line with IGEM's recommendations to support community-centred engagement approaches.

A community-centred engagement approach will see a range of opportunities offered, including at-place engagement with local

communities across metro, rural and regional Victoria. This engagement will link to the review described in Recommendation 9.

Land and fire agencies will also continue to implement engagement and education programs intended to help communities understand and manage their local bushfire risk and the trade-offs associated with mitigation activities, as well as the steps they can take to reduce bushfire risk on their land.

## 5.6. Non-burning fuel management

### 5.6.1. Recommendation 6

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) – supported by other organisations with a legislated responsibility for fuel management – plan for and increase the application of non-burning fuel management treatments including mechanical means.

The annual fuel management report should include the non-burn component of fuel management treatment, track annual change, and provide a comparison to the previous three years.

### 5.6.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ DELWP is enhancing Victoria's network of strategic fuel breaks and is planning for how this can be expanded further in preparation for the 2020-21 fire season. The creation and maintenance of strategic fuel breaks is a key mechanical treatment as Victoria adapts to the reduced window available for planned burning due to climate change.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ DELWP will include additional data regarding the non-burn component of fuel management treatment on public land, track annual change, and provide a comparison to the previous three years as detailed in DELWP's 2019-20 fuel management report.
- ▼ DELWP will work in partnership with DoT, other road and rail managers, CFA and local government to identify key arterial roads that provide strategic advantage for firefighting, and work together to conduct priority fuel treatment works ahead of the 2020-21 fire season.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ The Victorian Government will increase its investment in non-burning fuel management treatment, including mechanical treatment, through DELWP, CFA, DoT and local government.
- ▼ DELWP will expand the permanent network of strategic fuel breaks across Victoria by December 2022.
- ▼ DELWP will continue to deliver an expanded 365-day per year fuel management program to respond to earlier and longer bushfire seasons and enhance Victoria's first attack capacity including personnel, plant and equipment.
- ▼ DELWP will develop a strategy for the transition and retention of forestry contractors by June 2021, to ensure ready availability of specialist skills and machinery for the creation of fuel breaks, removal of hazardous trees and reopening of roads remain available to support bushfire and emergency management operations.
- ▼ The Victorian Government will increase its investment in the construction and maintenance of public land roads and bridges (for example, upgrading timber structures to fire-resistant materials), management of hazardous trees, vehicles and equipment to ensure that firefighters can safely access the forest for fire prevention, preparedness, fuel management (including planned burning and mechanical treatment), suppression and recovery operations, under conditions of increased fire frequency and intensity. These activities are targeted at improving access to public native forests.

## **Response background**

Climate change and the increase in hot, dry weather conditions are increasing the frequency and severity of bushfires and changing when suitable weather windows are available to conduct planned burns.

Improvements in machinery technology are allowing cost-effective mechanical works to be expanded to a range of terrain and conditions. There are significant opportunities to expand mulching on private land and on the interface of public and private (residential) land which will reduce the intensity of fire on people and assets and reduce the inconvenience of smoke from planned burning in areas closest to the community.

DELWP currently reports on mechanical works carried out and continues to increase its focus on mechanically based fuel treatments. In 2019-20 it delivered 17,635 ha, up from 12,034 ha in the previous year, and the highest area treated mechanically since reporting on mechanical treatments commenced in 2012-13.

Mechanical fuel treatments such as slashing and mulching are becoming an increasingly important component of the fuel management program. Expanded mechanical fuel treatments, including establishing further strategic fuel breaks to protect assets and the wider landscape from the impacts of bushfire, will be a key focus for land and fire agencies.

Work will commence on a major expansion of the strategic fuel break network. To complement new fuel breaks on public land, DELWP will work with DoT to identify and conduct fuel management along major arterial roads where road positioning provides strategic advantage for bushfire suppression and adds a valuable contribution to the strategic fuel break network.

DoT will also investigate vegetation management measures for the benefit of both biodiversity conservation and fuel reduction, such as the removal of invasive shrubs and the restoration of low biomass native grasslands.

The annual fuel management report will be updated to include the non-burn component of fuel management, and track trends over time.



## 5.7. Common approach to fuel management

### 5.7.1. Recommendation 7

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) lead the development and distribution of evidence based land and fuel management tools for use by all legislated fuel management organisations to ensure a common approach to fuel management.

### 5.7.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ DELWP and CFA are currently improving how weather conditions are reflected in bushfire risk modelling, improving data on house loss and asset location, and improving understanding of the likelihood of ignition events. This work will improve understanding of bushfire risk in a broader range of circumstances, providing an evidence base for the development of more sophisticated fuel management tools.
- ▼ DELWP has recently developed methods to measure the specific contribution of fuel management to risk reduction, improving Victoria's ability to measure the effectiveness of fuel management in reducing bushfire risk.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ As part of the Risk 2.0 project, DELWP will:
  - improve methods for modelling bushfire risk over a range of weather scenarios, by June 2021
  - develop an enhanced state-wide fuel and treatability layer by June 2021, and
  - be able to measure the effect of mechanical fuel treatments on fire behaviour by December 2020.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ DELWP will prepare a bushfire science, fire ecology and knowledge and predictive services strategic plan, to identify priority investment areas by April 2021.
- ▼ DELWP will ensure that all land and fire management agencies and local government have ongoing access to current bushfire risk information and will investigate the appropriate mechanism/s to deliver this by June 2021.
- ▼ The Victorian Government will provide additional funding to support Traditional Owners to lead implementation of the Cultural Fire Strategy.

### **Response background**

DELWP will work in partnership with the CFA to develop and coordinate the state-wide application of tools to support risk-based bushfire management across public and private land.

These tools will include strategic and operational planning frameworks and guidance to support a consistent approach to the development of risk-based bushfire management strategies, values checking, community engagement, and fuel management treatment selection, and integrated reporting and quality assessment.

Investment in next generation bushfire risk-modelling tools and input datasets will enhance the accuracy of predictive services used to identify those areas in the landscape where fuel management will have the greatest impact in reducing risk and measure the effectiveness of the fuel management program.

A cross-tenure monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework and supporting tools for data collection, storage and analysis will enable a consistent approach to capturing fuel management activities and assessing their effectiveness and appropriateness across multiple goals.

Recognising the importance of traditional indigenous knowledge of land and waters, the Victorian Government will also commit additional funding to support Traditional Owners to lead implementation of cultural land and fire practices, through the Cultural Fire Strategy.

## 5.8. Reporting requirements for fuel management

### 5.8.1. Recommendation 8

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) – in conjunction with legislated fuel management organisations – develop a common set of objectives, metrics and reporting requirements for fuel management that form part of a compulsory regime that enables the Victorian Government to report publicly on a holistic fuel management program. The reporting requirements should:

- a) apply to all organisations with a legislated role in fuel management; across public and private land (all land tenures); and at all levels – state, regional and municipal
- b) include residual risk where appropriate - however, complementary metrics should be developed if residual risk cannot be determined.

### 5.8.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ DELWP will release its 2019-20 fuel management report by December 2020.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ DELWP will engage with legislated fuel managers to identify additional existing data that can be incorporated into the 2020-21 fuel management report.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ DELWP will expand the fuel management Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework and the annual Fuel Management Report, to incorporate private land, roadsides and public land managed by other agencies. This will commence with available

activity data included in the 2021-22 report, building to a suite of relevant measures to provide transparency on activities and effectiveness in reducing bushfire risk.

### **Response background**

Currently, FFMVic reports annually on fuel management on public land and activities delivered jointly between CFA and FFMVic. This will be expanded by DELWP to cover all fuel management activities carried out by agencies with a legislated role in fuel management.

DELWP will work in close partnership with the CFA and other legislated fuel management organisations to:

- ▼ develop a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework that establishes a common set of data collection requirements for all agencies, and
- ▼ expand the existing FFMVic annual fuel management report to enable regular, transparent public reporting on fuel management activities and effectiveness, across both public and private land.

Development of objectives and metrics for evaluating fuel management effectiveness will link with the review of the residual risk target set out in Recommendation 9. Objectives, metrics and reporting requirements will be embedded in the expanded Code of Practice for Bushfire Management.

Future fuel management reports will include independent scrutiny and validation by IGEM, including publication of an annual IGEM statement of adequacy alongside the report, starting in 2020-21.

## **5.9. Residual risk target**

### **5.9.1. Recommendation 9**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (or the single entity referenced in Recommendation 4) – in collaboration with the Country Fire Authority and local government – undertake a review of the current residual risk target to ensure that it remains contemporary in terms of its designated percentage value. The review should:

- a) involve engagement with land and fire management agencies; public authorities; private organisations; individuals and any other stakeholders with a role in fuel management
- b) define a pathway to expanding the residual risk target to apply to all methods of fuel management, with the expansion of the target to apply across all organisations with a legislated responsibility for fuel management
- c) become part of a program of review of the State's land and fuel management policy occurring on a regular basis and not exceeding a five-year cycle.

### 5.9.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Current actions under way:

- ▼ DELWP and CFA are undertaking work to improve bushfire risk data and modelling. This work will provide the basis of building the technical capability for agencies to work with stakeholders and the community to review the current residual risk target.
- ▼ DELWP and CFA are currently updating approaches to modelling risk, centred on a metric of house loss. This work will broaden the range of values considered in bushfire risk modelling, to include water yield and quality, critical infrastructure, fire size and agricultural values.
- ▼ DELWP is currently undertaking work to improve modelling of the impact of fuel management on environmental values, including threatened species. These modelling improvements will drive improvements in evaluation and reporting, and strategic bushfire management planning.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ DELWP will deliver a new spatial dataset (to underpin bushfire risk modelling) that provides enhanced understanding of asset location by June 2021.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ DELWP will commission a comprehensive review of fuel management targets and provide advice to Victorian Government. New targets will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the community and be communicated as part of the sector's new strategy for land and fire management, by December 2021. This will link to engagement on bushfire fuel management agreed in response to Recommendation 5.

## **Response background**

The Victorian Government is continuing to invest in improved bushfire risk modelling. This will allow land and fire managers to better measure the effectiveness of planned burning and mechanical fuel treatment works, increase the precision of modelling and allow us to better protect our precious flora and fauna from the impacts of planned and unplanned fire.

Victoria's risk-based approach to bushfire management is world-leading. Through Safer Together, the Victorian Government committed to maintaining the residual risk of bushfires to communities at or below 70 per cent. This target has guided Victoria's fuel management program and has been consistently achieved.

The target has now been in place for five years, and the Victorian Government agrees it is timely for a comprehensive review of the residual risk target to be undertaken.

DELWP will commission a review that will make recommendations to Victorian Government. The review will include close engagement with the CFA, partner agencies and communities.

The output of this review will be a suite of targets applicable to all land tenures and organisations with a legislated basis for fuel management, and provide a basis for:

- ▼ Directing a fuel management program driven by the dual objectives of:
  - reducing the impact of major bushfires on life, property, the environment, communities and industry; and
  - maintaining or enhancing the resilience of natural ecosystems.

- ▼ Prioritising fuel management investment and activity, including both planned burning and mechanical treatment.
- ▼ Measuring and reporting on the activities and effectiveness of the state-wide, cross-tenure fuel management program.
- ▼ Enhancing community understanding of bushfire risk and agency performance, and the trade-offs inherent in reducing bushfire risk.

The review will engage with local communities and stakeholders and seek to build community understanding of residual risk as described in Recommendation 5. It will retain and build on Victoria's current approach of integrated land and fire management to ensure that fuel management is delivered against a full suite of objectives – bushfire risk management, biodiversity, environmental and social values, cultural heritage, and ecosystem services.

## 5.10. Shared responsibility

### 5.10.1. Recommendation 10

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria – in accepting that emergency management is a 'shared responsibility' - collaborate with the emergency management sector and community to:

- a) establish clear guidance that clarifies the roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, the private sector, responder agencies and government before, during and after emergencies; and
- b) develop, implement and evaluate an ongoing communications strategy that ensures these roles and responsibilities are well understood and reiterated throughout the year.

### 5.10.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

## Actions

Current actions underway:

- ▼ EMV released the SEMP in September 2020. The SEMP sets out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and households, as well as clarifies roles and assign responsibilities to the emergency management sector agencies, business, community groups and networks. The SEMP forms part of Victoria's new emergency management planning arrangements, including new arrangements at regional and local levels. Together, these planning reforms provide critical guidance for communities, ensuring they understand what they can expect in terms of support - and what is expected of them - in the event of an emergency.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ As part of the development of a state-wide community led preparedness strategy in response to the community preparedness recommendation of the 10-year Review report:
  - EMV will work with the sector to ensure that the shared responsibility model in the SEMP is further progressed through the regional and municipal emergency management planning processes.
  - EMV and its sector partners will use the Victorian Preparedness Framework to plan and test different high-impact, plausible scenarios across the sector and with communities, to embed what shared responsibility means.
  - EMV and responder agencies will forge stronger partnerships with the private sector in emergency planning and response as part of the shared responsibility model, building on the Critical Infrastructure Resilience Plans and Sector Resilience Networks, and.
  - the Victorian Government will continue to invest in different communication strategies to build a common understanding of risk and what individuals, households and communities can do to act and mitigate risk (for example, seasonal campaigns, engagement through the Safer Together Program and other year-round opportunities).



## **Response background**

People need timely, relevant and clear information and warnings to make informed decisions and stay safe during an emergency. This is the case for all Victorians, but especially crucial for certain groups including those who may be unfamiliar with Victoria and its environments, those who have language or accessibility issues, or are socially or geographically isolated.

The Victorian Government will continue to invest in the annual Victorian fire season public information campaign. The campaign targets travellers through multi-channel advertising in more than 17 languages, educating travellers on bushfire risk and how to access information in an emergency. A key component of the campaign is using postcode data to reach people in real time based on their current location. This has been used successfully for education and emergency information and will be continued in future campaigns.

Managing and responding to bushfire risk is an ongoing and shared responsibility in which everyone has a role. Bushfires are a real and significant threat to Victorians and there is no single strategy or action that will mitigate this risk. That is why we must all understand the actions we can take to mitigate, respond to and recover from bushfires, and work in partnership to be most effective in reducing this risk.

IGEM acknowledged that one of the most significant challenges in enlivening shared responsibility is ensuring everyone has a clear understanding of what this means in practice and is equipped with the information and tools to take appropriate action. A substantial amount of work has already been done to meaningfully detail individual roles and responsibilities for preparedness, response and recovery on the VicEmergency website, app and in the state's various hazard specific plans. The Victorian Government commits to building on this program of work, in collaboration with the emergency management sector and community, to improve collective understanding of shared responsibility.

## 5.11. Evacuation plans and processes

### 5.11.1. Recommendation 11

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Victoria Police – in collaboration with the community and the emergency management sector – reflect on events of the 2019-20 fire season to review and enhance evacuation plans and processes with consideration of:

- a) high risk areas (including remote locations)
- b) early evacuation triggers
- c) the potential for isolated communities
- d) the presence of tourists and non-residents
- e) individual decisions to not evacuate;
- f) the inability to evacuate
- g) consequence management and compounding events such as the loss of essential services or health impacts.

### 5.11.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Current actions underway:

- ▼ The Victorian Government is reviewing State of Disaster legislation to ensure that existing powers in relation to evacuation are adequate for different emergency scenarios.
- ▼ Evacuation plans for flood risk communities are being refined to reflect a possible wet spring and COVID-19 requirements.
- ▼ The Victorian Government has committed to reviewing Victoria's Code Red arrangements to ensure there is absolute clarity in relation to evacuation requirements and expectations. This work is expected to be finalised by November 2020.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ Prior to the 2021-22 financial year, the Victorian Government will make sure consistent processes and communications are developed in relation to evacuations and the closure of access roads, parks and reserves.
- ▼ Victoria Police, in collaboration with relevant agencies, will update the Joint Standard Operating Procedure (JSOP) for evacuations and other relevant doctrine to incorporate learnings from evacuations during the 2019-20 summer. This work will be completed in two phases (with priority actions completed before the upcoming season, followed by consideration of longer-term actions).
- ▼ Victoria Police, in conjunction with responder agencies will update and enhance risk intelligence and predictive service offerings to support evacuation decision-making as it applies to evacuation planning and support the development of modelling to enhance the future development of risk-based evacuation and localised emergency management plans.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ Victoria Police in conjunction with sector partners, commit to applying learnings from Exercise Praesidio - a simulated bushfire evacuation in 2019 involving the Powelltown, Three Bridges and Gilderoy communities – to improve future evacuation plans, processes and capability.
- ▼ Victoria Police will work with regions, partner agencies and the community to review, enhance and further develop evacuation plans for high-risk communities including those in remote locations. A key focus will be visitors and tourists planning to travel within these locations.
- ▼ To further strengthen evacuation plans and processes, Victoria Police commits to work with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM), land managers, fire agencies and the community to better understand and identify risks on a year-to-year basis, taking into account factors such as climate change, seasonal conditions, and previous bushfire history.
- ▼ Victoria Police, in conjunction with sector partners, will develop and deliver training and exercises to key incident management

and decision-making personnel on improved evacuation doctrine and processes.

- ▼ Victoria Police will look at creating a cadre of specially trained personnel equipped to undertake evacuation and traffic management roles required in an emergency, to ensure evacuation and early departure from at-risk areas occurs seamlessly.
- ▼ The Victorian Government commits to improving evacuation decision-making processes– for example, through expanded use of more sophisticated tools such as spatially based evacuation planning currently being trialled along the Great Ocean Road.

### **Response background**

IGEM observed that the scale of evacuation and relocation of communities during the 2019-20 fire season was unlike anything Victoria had ever seen or experienced. It impacted residential communities and thousands of tourists and travellers. The 2019-20 bushfires highlighted the importance of evacuation plans and processes in ensuring the safety of communities.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the need for clear evacuation plans and processes during all types of emergencies and commits to strengthening its evacuation advice and practices as a priority. This commitment will extend to developing better processes and communications around 'leave early' warnings.

## **5.12. Emergency management planning reforms**

### **5.12.1. Recommendation 12**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria – in collaboration with the emergency management sector and as part of the emergency management planning reforms:

- a) review, update and confirm arrangements for all tiers of control, including the flexible application of areas of operations, with a

focus on the triggers for activation, integration with other tiers of control and clearly defined roles and responsibilities

- b) exercise these arrangements to ensure they are appropriate and familiar during emergencies.

### 5.12.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Current actions underway:

- ▼ The SEMP incorporates command and control arrangement flexibility to enable a more agile response to concurrent and compounding emergencies.



Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV and agencies will confirm control arrangements in readiness for 2020-21 summer season, including the intended use and application of any area of operation, and subsequently exercise the state and regional control teams to ensure arrangements and processes are understood.
- ▼ EMV and its partners will train personnel on any consequential changes to the tiers of control through the introduction of the SEMP and undertaking scenario exercises to test the respective state, regional and municipal emergency management plans.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ State, regional and incident tier arrangements will be reinforced through the delivery of the Regional and Municipal Emergency Management plans to better support emergency response activities.
- ▼ The revised State Bushfire Plan will inform any changes to arrangements to the existing tiers of command and control for bushfire, while improving the doctrine that supports the operation of each tier by clearly defining roles and responsibilities, supported by consistent implementation of agreed Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System structures.

- ▼ The Victorian Government commits to developing community-focused communication and engagement strategies to build greater understanding of operational structures and arrangements across all phases of emergencies.
- ▼ EMV will conduct a review of the introduction of the first SEMP following the 2020-21 fire season, to inform any necessary changes, prior to the 2021-22 fire season.

## 5.13. Incident Control Centres

### 5.13.1. Recommendation 13

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria – in partnership with agencies engaged in state, regional and incident control centres:

- a) review and update shift roster and handover processes to ensure they are procedurally consistent and support the achievement of objectives at all stages of a protracted event
- b) provide training and guidance to ensure shift roster and handover processes are consistently applied in state, regional and incident control centres.

### 5.13.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV will commence work with the sector to update shift roster and handover processes including the use and application of existing incident action planning guidance and tools, as well as creation of new tools such as standardised handover templates.
- ▼ EMV will update the pre-season training content so that handover practices and processes are properly understood in state, regional and incident control centres, as well as reinforcing

consistent application of incident action planning, especially during protracted and complex events.

- ▼ The Real Time Monitoring and Evaluation (RTM&E) program will include examination of handover processes and incident action planning as part of the state's Assurance and Learning Unit 2020-21 season activity. The RTM&E function monitors operational performance, systems and processes, and evaluations.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ EMV will consider compliance auditing across a range of critical incident management practices, such as measuring progress towards achieving incident objectives and completing handovers, as part of the development of a sector-wide outcomes framework in response to the sector-wide outcomes recommendation in the Review report.
- ▼ As part of the investment in training for the sector identified in the sector capability and capacity recommendation in the review report, the Victorian Government will ensure that Incident Management Team personnel are provided with the training, exercising and simulation experiences required to effectively perform their roles and apply these processes in an environment with increasing complexities and overlapping emergencies.
- ▼ IGEM recognised the significant achievements of Victoria's response to the 2019-20 bushfires, despite the challenges presented by the scale, extent and duration of the season. Resources were drawn from multiple agencies over an extended period, including from other jurisdictions in Australia and internationally. The complex and prolonged nature of this event and the varying industrial arrangements around shift rotations across a multitude of agencies, made information exchange and handover processes within regional and incident management centres critical.
- ▼ The Victorian Government is committed to improving handover processes, particularly across different shifts and personnel changes, to facilitate more effective and consistent handover and incident management practices.

## 5.14. Personnel management

### 5.14.1. Recommendation 14

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria – in consultation with relevant agencies – develop a system to manage personnel and asset deployments to all tiers of incident management to meet the needs of the emergency and support the health and wellbeing of personnel. Where appropriate and within occupational health and safety requirements, this may include:

- a) standardised shift rosters across agencies and incident management tiers
- b) a single or integrated platform to allow consistent recording of shift times and locations
- c) records of accreditation, qualification, training and currency.

### 5.14.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

### Actions

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV will:
  - work with the sector to examine the application and constraints of resource management, with a view to developing a standing state strategic resource plan. This review will include safety management systems and processes
  - as a priority, develop common incident resourcing principles to maximise deployment and resourcing, along with a fit for purpose safety management system that can integrate information from across agencies, and
  - work with the sector to update and re-issue the multi-agency Fatigue Management Safety Fact Sheet and include fatigue management content within pre-season briefings.



Longer-term actions:

- ▼ As part of the development of a contemporary emergency management operating model identified in the response to the sector capability and capacity recommendation of the Review report, EMV will:
  - develop sector guidelines that optimise deployment; service delivery; employee health; and wellbeing. These guidelines will seek to enhance consistency where appropriate, while supporting an agile and diverse workforce
  - work with the sector to develop and implement a robust system for Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) incident management
  - initiate research into interstate and international rostering and resourcing management arrangements, to identify potential improvements or alternative models to the current Victorian arrangements, and
  - in consultation with all agencies, develop consolidated fatigue management guidance to inform multi-agency incident operations.

## **Response background**

Over the previous summer, IGEM observed that paid staff, volunteers and community members went above and beyond expectations to support the response to the fires. Without this dedication over the 2019–20 fire season, the outcome for Victoria may have been very different.

Each of the organisations that come together to respond to major emergencies in Victoria are established and operate as individual entities in their own right. Most operate under differing employment or work arrangements, usually underpinned by OH&S requirements. These arrangements can influence the systems that are used to record and track resourcing, shift length and deployment periods, with implications for major emergency and sector-wide planning and rostering.

Rather than work towards blanket standardisation, rosters, deployment and shift periods must be fit for purpose and designed to support better incident management outcomes. Contemporary systems of work must also recognise, build in and accommodate workforce diversity and

requirements of both paid and volunteer personnel, while attempting to ensure consistency of people performing roles, and appropriate periods of rest between shifts to support their health and wellbeing. These challenges will only grow with predicted increases in the type and scale of emergency events.

A number of agencies have in place and operate according to their own fatigue management guidelines. This means a variety of guidance applies across multi-agency teams and tiers of emergency management, creating potential disparate operating arrangements during emergencies. The Victorian Government is committed to doing more to support the health and wellbeing of personnel, especially during protracted and complex emergency events.

## 5.15. Capacity model

### 5.15.1. Recommendation 15

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria collaborate with the emergency management sector to develop a capacity model that considers current and future:

- a) career and volunteer emergency management personnel requirements
- b) identified and trained personnel for surge requirements
- c) emergency risks and climate scenarios.

### 5.15.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

## Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ EMV has appointed critical roles following the response to the 2019-20 fire season. The creation of the Cross-Border and Preparedness Operations Manager and a Strategic

Communications Manager are part of the first steps in addressing gaps identified.

- ▼ EMV and sector partners have been and will continue to utilise the Victorian Preparedness Framework to assess the capability and inform capacity requirements required to plan for, withstand and recover from emergencies.
- ▼ Local Government Victoria will continue its work with local government authorities to implement its Councils and Emergencies Project. This multi-year project utilises the Victorian Preparedness Framework to model capability and capacity of local government in emergency management.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ The sector, supported by EMV's leadership, commits to:
  - adapting emergency management training and accreditation programs in the lead-up to the 2020-21 fire season to maintain delivery during COVID-19 response restrictions, including eLearning and eBriefing processes. This approach will be reviewed with a view to informing the longer-term approach detailed below
  - commencing a review of the current training and accreditation program for incident management personnel and critical emergency management roles, that informs an action plan supporting the building and sustainment of the sector's capability requirements into the future
  - recruiting the necessary resources to manage seasonal risks in the lead-up to the 2020-21 season and including this within the EMC's annual attestation, and
  - working with agencies to develop and document the services and supports they bring to the management of emergencies. This will provide clarity in respect to community expectations and responsibilities.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ As part of the development of a contemporary emergency management operating model identified in the response to the Review, EMV will:

- work with the sector to review workforce needs, to inform the design of a capability model that incorporates strategic recruitment, accreditation and retention, in paid and volunteer workforces. This model will focus on new opportunities to educate the sector, providing leadership development pathways for all personnel. This review will also identify investment required in infrastructure, systems, governance and processes
- work with responder agencies to ensure that the assets, tools and equipment required to effectively and safely respond to bushfire emergencies in a changing climate and physical environment are identified and incorporated in future business cases, and
- work with climate scientists to undertake a review of emergency risks under climate scenarios across a range of hazard types to inform future capacity requirements.

### **Response background**

The Victorian Government acknowledges IGEM's finding that the existing workforce capacity across the Victorian emergency sector was challenged by the extended duration and severity of the 2019-20 fire season, requiring national and international assistance. The sector's workforce capacity will continue to be challenged as we experience disasters more frequently, with greater intensity and scale, including bushfires, floods, sea-level rise, extreme heat events and storms. The role of the volunteer was ever-present in the 2019-20 preparedness and response and will remain of crucial importance under increasing emergency risk.

Responding to these challenges will require a contemporary emergency management operating model comprising the right number people (capacity) with the right mix of skills (capability) and the necessary supporting infrastructure (systems and tools).

As the emergency management sector transitions to a more contemporary operating model, the actions outlined will help ensure the emergency management sector can transition to an operating model that continues to effectively deliver into the future.

## 5.16. Cross border operations and resource management

### 5.16.1. Recommendation 16

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria works with the emergency management sector and relevant emergency management entities in New South Wales and South Australia to identify and address key cross border operational and resource management issues. This engagement should aim to enhance interoperability and maximise the capability and capacity of agencies to work together during emergencies along Victoria's borders.

### 5.16.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM's recommendation.

#### Actions

Current actions under way:

- ▼ EMV has appointed a dedicated Cross-Border and Preparedness Operations Manager since the end of the 2019-20 fire season, whose immediate priorities are to assess existing cross-border mutual aid agreements for emergency management.

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV will lead a sector review to ensure cohesive and consistent warnings and advice messages are broadcast along borders.
- ▼ EMV will work closely with relevant stakeholders in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania to implement improvements in emergency preparedness and response, including formalising procedures for deployment of liaison officers across borders.
- ▼ Prior to the 2020-21 fire season, EMV will work with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and the Victorian Cross-Border Commissioner to clarify emergency management roles and responsibilities of the Victorian Cross-Border Commissioner. Building on this, the EMC will partner with the Cross-Border Commissioner to strengthen interstate

relationships in relation to emergency management arrangements.

- ▼ The EMC will continue to strengthen the interests of Victoria through representation on the Commissioners and Chief Officers Strategic Committee in relation to the Arrangement for Interstate Assistance.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ EMV and the sector will identify cross-border risks and opportunities through the Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Planning processes.
- ▼ EMV commits to undertaking scenario exercises with cross-border emergency management partners to foster interoperability and stronger relationships between states.
- ▼ Victoria will work with other states to ensure interoperability of systems and standardised tools as far as possible, to support cross border assistance.

## **Response background**

Fires burning along the Victorian and New South Wales border, from Albury to Mallacoota, tested cross-border arrangements between the neighbouring states. IGEM found strengths within the formal and informal arrangements, which saw two-way assistance between states to manage and respond to the bushfires. IGEM also noted areas for improvement in these arrangements to maximise states' emergency management capacity and capability and provide better outcomes for border communities.

The Victorian Government is committed to enhancing interoperability and optimising the ability of agencies to work together during emergencies along Victoria's borders.

## **5.17. Dissemination of information**

### **5.17.1. Recommendation 17**

The Inspector-General for Emergency Management recommends that Emergency Management Victoria – in collaboration with the emergency

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management sector – develops and implements processes to ensure greater dissemination and improved understanding of information for all Victorians, and visitors to Victoria in an emergency event. This should consider but not be exclusive to individuals who:

- a) are not familiar with Victoria and its environment
- b) find it difficult to understand and respond to emergency information
- c) are socially or geographically isolated.

### 5.17.2. Response

The Victorian Government **accepts** IGEM’s recommendation.

#### **Actions**

Immediate actions:

- ▼ EMV will enhance the VicEmergency app and website to better accommodate needs of CALD communities ahead of the 2020-21 fire season.
- ▼ Before the 2021-22 financial year, EMV - in collaboration with agencies - will review and update the Victorian Warning Protocol, Joint Standard Operating Procedure 4.01– Public Information and Warnings, and other guidelines and documentation, to incorporate the findings of the IGEM Inquiry.
- ▼ Victoria will continue to take the lead in working with other states and territories to agree to, and seek national funding for, enhancements to the Emergency Alert platform. These enhancements will allow translation into languages other than English to better reach CALD communities.

Longer-term actions:

- ▼ The Victorian Government will investigate options for disseminating critical information across a range of emergencies in multiple languages, building on lessons learned from both the bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. Enhancements will improve translation capabilities (such as better pre-formed messaging and using more symbols where appropriate) and accessibility, including text-to-voice opportunities.

- ▼ Victoria will look to partner with the Commonwealth and target its \$37.1 million package to strengthen telecommunications resilience in socially and geographically isolated communities in bushfire and disaster-prone areas. This could include investment in upgrading alternative power sources and improving NBN satellite services in rural and country fires services and designated evacuation areas.
- ▼ To support dissemination and improved individual and community awareness of the impacts, disruptions and closures to the road network due to emergencies, DoT will seek funding to upgrade and modernize the VicTraffic App. This will enable integration with existing modern digital platforms to create centralised, up-to-date disruption information and journey planning; meet surge demand during emergencies; and support individuals and communities to make timely decisions about their safety, including those unfamiliar with road networks.

### **Response background**

People need timely, relevant and clear information and warnings to make informed decisions and stay safe during an emergency. This is the case for all Victorians and all emergencies, but especially crucial for certain groups, including those who may be unfamiliar with Victoria and its environments, those who have language or accessibility issues, or are socially or geographically isolated.

The Victorian Government will continue to invest in the annual Victorian Fire Season public information campaign, referred to in response to Recommendation 10.



## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. Appendix 1 – Acronyms

ADF	Australian Defence Force
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
BRV	Bushfire Recovery Victoria
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CFA	Country Fire Authority
COVID-19	Coronavirus
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DoT	Department of Transport
EM-COP	Emergency Management Common Operating Picture
EMC	Emergency Management Commissioner
EMV	Emergency Management Victoria
FFMVic	Forrest Fire Management Victoria
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
IGEM	Inspector General of Emergency Management
JSOP	Joint Standard Operating Procedure
MEMP	Municipal Emergency Management Plans
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
REMP	Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Plans
RTM&E	Real-time Monitoring and Evaluation
SCC	State Control Centre
SEMP	State Emergency Management Plan
the Inquiry	IGEM Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian fire season
the Review	IGEM Review of 10 years of reform in Victoria’s emergency management sector

## 6.2. Appendix 2 – IGEM Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season Terms of Reference

The examination of Victoria’s preparedness, response, relief and recovery concerning the 2019-20 fire season

### Phase 1 - Community and sector preparedness for and response to the 2019-20 summer season

Matters for consideration:

- ▼ Effectiveness of emergency management command and control and accountability arrangements in Victoria.
- ▼ Effectiveness of Victoria’s operational response to the 2019-20 fire season.
- ▼ Review of the effectiveness of the declaration of a state of disaster under the Emergency Management Act 1986 – including the appropriateness of supporting legislative and administrative processes, communication, and community compliance.
- ▼ State evacuation planning and preparedness processes/practices and their effectiveness, with an emphasis on remote/isolated communities and Victorian peak holiday season locations.
- ▼ The timeliness and effectiveness of activation of Commonwealth assistance, and Commonwealth resource availability.
- ▼ Preparedness ahead of the 2019-20 fire season; including the effectiveness of regional emergency management work undertaken to inform and educate the community about the coming season, community engagement, impact of lengthening fire seasons, and any relevant legislation, policy and practice.
- ▼ Consider all challenges and implications for bushfire preparedness arising from increasingly longer and more severe bushfire seasons as a result of climate change.
- ▼ In the context of bushfire preparedness, assess the readiness and responsibilities of statutory agencies, local government and State Government bodies.
- ▼ Review of all opportunities and approaches to bushfire preparedness, including different methods of fuel and land management (for example, ‘cool burning’, mechanical slashing, integrated forest management and traditional fire approaches)

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to protect life and property as well as ecological and cultural values.

- ▼ Consideration of the effectiveness of Victoria's Code Red day arrangements and their application in practice.
- ▼ In considering effectiveness of Victoria's operational response to the 2019-20 fire season, IGEM should particularly consider:
  - effectiveness of the State's response priorities, including primacy of life
  - effectiveness of public information and warning systems, including cross-border coordination and communication
  - impact of increasingly longer fire seasons on the ability to prepare, deploy and sustain efforts directed towards emergency events in Victoria
  - impact of providing Victorian responder officers to other Australian jurisdictions to assist with emergency events (as early as September 2019 this summer season)
  - availability and utilisation of private assets and resources (including plant equipment) to support emergency preparedness and response
  - planning and response mechanisms to protect biodiversity threatened by bushfire
  - effectiveness of the existing workforce model to support response, relief and recovery.
- ▼ Review support available to staff and volunteers in terms of mental health and wellbeing.
- ▼ Consideration of the adequacy of existing administrative and funding mechanisms in place at a state level to support the operational response efforts.
- ▼ In considering the timeliness and effectiveness of activation of Commonwealth assistance, and Commonwealth resource availability, IGEM should particularly consider:
  - effectiveness of current national resource sharing arrangements when multiple and simultaneous fire events are occurring

- effectiveness of existing governance arrangements supporting access to Commonwealth and State air fleets
- use and integration of Australian Defence Force assets into Victoria's emergency response and relief operations.

## **Phase 2 – Progress and effectiveness of Victoria's immediate relief, and recovery arrangements concerning the 2019-20 fire season**

Matters for consideration:

- ▼ Effectiveness of immediate relief and recovery work and arrangements, including at the regional and incident levels.
- ▼ Creation of Bushfire Recovery Victoria, the National Bushfire Recovery Agency and how these entities will work together for the benefit of affected Victorian communities, including consideration of long term efforts directed at social, economic (including small business, tourism and agricultural sectors) and environmental recovery.
- ▼ Effectiveness of how roles and responsibilities for recovery have been divided between Emergency Management Victoria and Bushfire Recovery Victoria.